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ORIGINAL,

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SERMONS

FOR

EVERY SUNDAY OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.

THREE SERMONS FOR EVERY SUNDAY.

BY

F. X. WENINGER, S. J.

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY.

SECOND EDITION.

CINCINNATI:
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WITH

EPISCOPAL APPROBATION.

PREFACE.

Having now been for over fifty years engaged in preaching the Word of God, I thought that, before leaving this world, I would do a good work in presenting to my brethren in the holy ministry a series of sermons, which, in Twelve Sections, would cover the whole field of ecclesiastical eloquence.

The Sermons for all the *Sundays* and *Feasts* of the ecclesiastical year—*three* for each Sunday and Feast form the first Two Sections.

But it was, by no means, my intention to present to the clergy sermons in the style of lectures. Such a thing appeared to me as of little utility, because not practical. For, as St. Francis de Sales observes: Nothing does more harm to the fruit of a sermon than tiresome length. Sermons for Sundays and Feasts, delivered at *Mass*, according to my long experience in the Old and New World, should not last longer than twenty-five minutes. By publishing these series of Sermons, I wish to lend assistance to the preacher, to direct him in the choice of the subject of his sermon for the approaching Sunday or Feast.

In these Sermons the preacher will always find the subject announced in an *original* way and developed

systematically, and the Sermon at the same time *short* and *practical.*

Each Sermon delivered, as it ought to be, *distinctly*, will occupy just twenty-five minutes.

Still, notwithstanding their brevity, the Sermons are not simple sketches, but thoroughly elaborated Sermons.

May Mary, the mother of the WORD of GOD, bless this my labor for the sanctification of the children of God.

F. X. WENINGER, S. J.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"The night is past and the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."—Rom. 13.

A NEW ecclesiastical year! A new year of graces! The festivals of the Church are a spiritual tree, which yearly decks itself with new fruits, by the fresh commemoration of past great events and mysteries; a commemoration, which God blesses with special graces for every child of His Church. The Church, on every festival, prays as if the mystery which she commemorates had taken place that very day. In truth, as St. Augustine says, for God there is but one eternal day. But only those children of the Church gather these yearly fruits, who earnestly prepare themselves for the festival; and the more zealous their efforts, the more abundant their harvest.

But just because the year commences with Advent, and because on a good beginning depends, in a great measure, the progress of a work, every Catholic should be anxious to celebrate this day, the first Sunday of Advent, in the spirit of the Church, in order to be animated with her spirit the whole year.

For this end I shall consider to-day with you the words of the Apostle:

"*The night is past, the day is at hand.*"

Mary, Mother of the promised Redeemer, give us thy maternal blessing!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"The night is past, the day is at hand." These words of the Apostle the Church to-day makes her own. The effects of sin are exemplified by the properties of the night.

At night one either does not see objects at all, or sees them indistinctly. Thus also man in the state of sin, either does not see things that concern his salvation, or he does not see them clearly.

At night one does not work; and the same happens in the state of sin. The sinner can gain nothing for eternal life, even should he zealously practise external works of devotion.

At night the beasts of the wilderness prowl in quest of their prey. In the sinner's heart passions are rampant, and seek for their base gratification.

Night brings *sleep* to man. Not unlike is the effect of sin on the soul. Sleep, as the proverb says, is the brother of death. The man who sleeps, sees not, hears not, eats not, labors not. Were he to remain always in this condition, he would, in a certain sense, be dead. Not very different is the spiritual state of the sinner.

He *sees not;* he does not recognize, does not perceive the malice and heinousness of sin. On the contrary, he denies the wickedness of the most abominable sins, pretending that they are but natural weaknesses, or he even praises them as virtues. He calls pride, self-respect; avarice, economy; anger, enmity, and revenge, righteous self-defense; impure attachments, harmless love; fraud, prudence. He looks but seldom into his conscience, and excuses himself as best he can to others and to himself, saying, that he is not so bad, that others are still worse, that he yet hopes to be saved, that God is infinite goodness, forgetting that he is also infinite justice.

Regarding his duties as a Christian, he thinks that he has fulfilled them, because in the morning he makes the sign of the cross, says a few prayers in the evening, hears Mass on Sunday, unless an entertainment or some business, even of small importance, calls him elsewhere, goes to confession once a year through human respect, and receives Holy Communion without devotion or thanksgiving, and, perhaps, even without due preparation. This seems to him sufficient. He forgets that it is the duty of every Christian to strive after sanctity; such an aim he leaves to priests and religious, as something not intended for ordinary Christians. He sleeps.

The sinner *hears not.* Even should the Holy Ghost admonish him by inspirations, the tumult of temporal business and enjoyment makes him deaf to that voice.

He *eats not.* He partakes not of the bread of life in order to grow in the imitation of Christ, and endeavors not by the practice of virtue to multiply his treasures and merits for heaven. He sleeps, and *dreams* of a life far different from that in which he is really engaged. He dreams of a life of ease and comfort in this world, and lives without a thought of approaching eternity. It will be well for him if the threat of divine judgment rouses him from his sleep, and if he obeys the call of the Apostle: "Rise, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten thee" (Eph. 5, 14).

As those who sleep dislike to be wakened, so the sinner dislikes all efforts to convert him, or rouse him from the sleep of sin. If he heeds the call of grace and returns, by a sincere conversion, to God, then he suddenly sees and recognizes the evil of his former state. The beauty of virtue reveals itself to him, and he becomes conscious of the necessity of fulfilling all his duties as a Christian. He listens now to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and makes use of all the sources of grace in order to live like a child of God.

But that this condition may be lasting, and the conversion be a true one—the contrary of which happens only too often—the Apostle calls to us to-day: "Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light!" By the expression: "Cast off," the Apostle clearly points out the reason why so many presumed conversions are only deceptions. The sinner stops when

only half way. He renounces for a time, and under certain circumstances, this or that sin; but no sooner, circumstances changing, do temptations regain their former strength, than he is the same sinner as of old. He renounces sin only partly, that is, he sins not so frequently, or for a time not at all. But he does not avoid new occasions of sin with sufficient care. He does not renounce sin entirely. He remains near it; and it is no wonder that we soon see verified in him the words: "And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first." No; if our conversion is to be genuine, then we must follow the directions of the Apostle, and *cast off* the works of darkness. We must cast off not only sin, but also every occasion that leads to it, with that resolution of which Christ speaks to us when He says: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee;" that is, rather suffer temporal injury, rather sacrifice life itself, than commit sin or remain voluntarily in the occasion of doing evil.

But we must not be satisfied with practising Christian virtues for a time, for the Apostle says: "Put on the armor of light;" which means that we must always and every-where practise those virtues which are required by our station in life, that we must put them on, so to say, like a *robe for our soul*. In this manner the works of light become at the same time weapons which help us to conquer as children of the Church militant.

Happy the souls who commence this Advent with an

earnest will and renewed resolutions, and fulfill this twofold exhortation of the Apostle. They will gather rich fruits from the approaching festival of the Nativity, and they will continue to increase their store during the year they have so well commenced.

Let us begin the work of renovation at once; let us not put it off till the eve of Christmas, as our sluggish nature may suggest. Before the season of preparation is over, we shall have made considerable progress. God grant it! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Brethren, it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep."—Rom. 13, 11.

AGAIN Advent, the time of grace, has arrived. As the life of nature demands the change of seasons that the earth be clothed anew with flowers and fruits, so also the spiritual life in the world of grace demands the renewed consideration of the mysteries of our redemption, as they are placed before our eyes in the order of salvation. These holy mysteries are imaged in the different periods of the year; and here again is verified the word of Holy Writ in praise of the divine wisdom of the Creator: Who disposes all things sweetly, yet powerfully, and in wonderful harmony. It behooves us to co-operate with these dispositions of divine Providence, as Holy Church, our Mother, teaches us and demands of her children. The wish of the Church in regard to the celebration of Advent, is pointed out to us in to-day's Epistle and Gospel. Let us meditate on their meaning that we may awake forever from the sleep of sin and its dreams. I said last year that the state of a sinner is a sleep. I say to you this year:

The state of the sinner is a dream.

O Mary, conceived without sin, grant that we may during this Advent cleanse our hearts from every stain of evil!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

St. Paul in to-day's Epistle, illustrates the state of sin from the qualities of night. How? We considered this last year on the first Sunday of Advent. This year I assert that the life of a man in the state of sin, is a dream. To make this my assertion clear by a memorable example, listen to what happened in Belgium in the reign of Philip the Good.

The king, one day found lying in the street a poor man totally intoxicated. He gave orders to have him carried to the palace, to be clothed in new and splendid garments, and to be laid upon the royal bed. When the man awoke, sobered by his sleep, he could not understand his position, and wondered what had happened. He looked around, rubbed his eyes, and could not make out whether he was awake or dreaming. While in this state of astonishment, the servants and courtiers of the king came to him, and, following their master's instructions, persuaded him that he was really king, and that his former miserable state had been only an illusion. Highly delighted at what he had heard, he passed the day in royal happiness. At night, after he had relapsed through excessive drink into a state of intoxication, the king had him dressed again in his rags, and laid in the street. When he awoke, he thought that only in his dreams he had enjoyed the pleasure of royalty.

Let us now make the application: Man is in a similar condition when asleep in sin. His life is a dream.

Let us draw out the comparison, and we shall recognize and admit the truth of this assertion.

He who dreams believes that he is in a different state from that in which he really is. He thinks that he is awake, yet he is not. He thinks that he sees, and yet he does not see. He thinks that he hears, he even sometimes believes that he listens to music and joyful songs, and yet it is all false. He thinks that he eats and drinks, and he does not. He thinks that he speaks sensibly, and he does not speak at all. He thinks that he walks, and he is in bed. He thinks he is well, and perhaps he is sick, very sick. He thinks he is rich, whilst in truth he is poor. Not unlike is the condition of sinners, of whom it is said in the seventy-fifth Psalm: "They have slept their sleep and have found nothing in their hands."

The pleasures of this world appear to the sinner as the highest attainable good. They seem to him capable of satisfying the longings of his heart. He thinks that he provides for the present and the future; and yet all is deception, vanity of vanities.

And what causes this deception? I answer: Dreams arise because during sleep our excited imagination is not guided by reason and reality. Imagination not guided by reason and faith, makes the life of the sinner a dream.

The dream varies, however, with the nature of

the night in which the sinner sleeps. This night is threefold: The night of *unbelief*—of *misbelief*—and of a *dead* belief.

The *unbeliever* sleeps in the night of paganism, and he dreams. The sun of faith has not yet risen for him, or else has set again. Hence his degradation, his deception. Instead of being moved by every object that strikes his senses to glorify the Creator, he worships creatures, he idolizes himself.

The *misbeliever* dreams in the night with which a false creed has obscured his mind. The sunlight of the infallible doctrine of the Church does not shine for him. He thinks that he belongs to the true Church of Christ, that, though voluntarily misbelieving, he will still be saved. He dreams.

The condition in which a child of the Church lives when he is in sin, also resembles a dream.

The world has placed itself between him and the sun of faith, like a moon. If in nature an eclipse were lasting, the sun would lose all his power, all his influence over organic life. In the same manner I say: The sinner, though a Catholic, dreams. He thinks that, because he is a Catholic and believes, he is on the right path to heaven; but he does not consider the words which St. James uses: "Thou believest. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. Show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee, by works, my faith" (2, 18). Do you hear, sinner? The faith which your life has dishonored, has become the millstone that draws you still deeper into the abyss of hell.

And how fast is the sleep in which these three kinds of sleepers dream away their lives! Be it the night of unbelief, misbelief, or dead belief, which fills their minds with illusions; experience teaches how difficult it is to waken them. They like to dream, and resist an awakening. I have met many in my life who slept, and to all appearances dreamed, and it was impossible to rouse them. I called to them as loud as I could, I shook them with all my strength,—it was all in vain. I held the light close to their eyes; they smiled in their dream; the light fell on their eyes, but did not open them, and they continued to sleep and to dream.

This is a picture of sinners held captive by the illusions of their state.

Truly it is difficult to convert heathens and unbelievers to the light of faith, if God does not force them, so to say, by a miracle, to recognize the truth. Notwithstanding the numberless miracles which Christ Himself, His apostles, and their followers have wrought in confirmation of the Gospel, entire nations are yet asleep, and after nineteen hundred years almost the half of mankind is still buried in the darkness of unbelief, and dream the strangest dreams.

The same may be said of Jews and heretics. For nineteen hundred years have the former awaited the rising of that Sun which during all these years has sent His beams upon their heads; they still dream of a coming Messiah.

There are heretics who for fifteen hundred years have been separated from the true Church, although

every child that believes in Christ must recognize the Catholic Church, because she is the *first*, as she is the only true Church of Christ. The Lord Himself assures us that: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

But what shall we say of the blindness of those sinners who are children of the Church? How obstinately they dream in their sleep of sin! What is the cause? St. John answers this question when he says: "Men loved darkness rather than the light" (John 3, 19). Notwithstanding all that is told them and proved to them, they, perhaps, only smile like those who are fast asleep—blink with the eyes of the mind at the light of faith, but do not open them.

May the Lord have pity on them, and give them a love of truth, that they may open the eyes of their mind and save themselves before—as the gospel of to-day threatens—the trumpets of the last judgment sound, and they are forced to cry:

Oh, what madness! We have erred, and the light of truth was not within us. Woe to us! The night of despair which now hangs over us is not a dream, it shall last forever!

THIRD SERMON.

"Be you like to men who wait for their Lord."—Luke 12, 36.

OUR first parents in Paradise, and through them the entire human race, received the promise of the future Redeemer and Saviour. Four thousand years, however, passed before the Son of God entered the world, in the fullness of time, and accomplished, through His suffering and death, the work of redemption. The world had first to be prepared for His arrival; man had to feel and experience that by himself he is not able to know and serve God, or to regulate his life, as the relation of creature to the Creator demands.

But also in preparation for the second coming of Christ, as Judge of the living and the dead, man ought so to use his time of life, that on the last day he may be able to stand with confidence before the tribunal of his Saviour, and be found worthy to enjoy in His company the fruits of redemption in the kingdom of heaven.

The most necessary preparation for so happy an issue is a longing for His coming, together with solicitude to prepare our hearts for His reception, even in this life.

O Mary, Queen of the prophets, thou who didst unite in thy heart the longing of all the prophets, and who, of all human beings, wast best prepared to receive the Lord, obtain for us grace so to regulate our lives that, when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead, we may be ready!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Thus complains the Evangelist. Alas! with how much reason! Notwithstanding the immeasurable wretchedness into which sin had precipitated us, and to redeem us from which Christ came upon earth, the words of the Evangelist were literally fulfilled: "And His own received Him not." Bethlehem closed its doors against Him, at His birth; Jerusalem disowned Him and nailed Him to the cross. The hearts of the children of Israel, whom God had especially elected, and by the voice of the prophets again and again admonished, were, after four thousand years, not prepared to receive Him.

Neither did the heathen welcome with joy and gratitude the message of His coming. Only too soon did they arise with all the rage of persecutors against the Kingdom of Christ,—against His Holy Church.

All the apostles, whom the Lord sent over the entire world to preach the Gospel, suffered martyrdom. St. John, although not actually deprived of life, was thrown into a caldron of boiling oil, and was saved only by a miracle. Seventeen millions of martyrs shed their blood, before the Romans, as a people, confessed Christ. And how many nations exist, even to-day, who obstinately refuse to receive the message of salvation!

But, even among those who have had the happiness to

become children of the Church through baptism, how many deserve the reproach: "And His own received Him not!" Not to speak of the many people who, by voluntary misbelief, separate themselves from the Church and exclude from their hearts the Lord whom they recognize as their Redeemer; let us particularly think of those who, while to all appearances they belong to the Church, yet, through sin, banish Christ from their hearts.

"The kingdom of God is within you," says the Lord. Thus it should be. As Christ entered the world for the salvation of all mankind, so likewise He came to save each soul, and He, therefore, demands to be received by each one of us. This, however, is the case only when we remain in the state of sanctifying grace, and when we open our hearts to the inspirations of actual grace, to be enlightened and strengthened, that, in following Christ, we may fulfill the most holy will of God, and thus be saved through Christ.

Again and again the Lord's voice invites each soul; He watches and knocks at the door of our heart, as Holy Writ teaches, and calls out to us: Open—let me enter into thy heart. Christ Himself says: We will come, the Father and I, and make thy heart our abode. This disposition, this care, this co-operation with the grace of the Lord, made the saints what they were.

But how much in this regard is amiss in those, who, though they call themselves children of Holy Church, banish by mortal sin the Lord from their

hearts, and do not open them to the inspirations of grace, but listen only to the spirit of the world? Instead of preparing an abode for Christ, they prepare a dwelling for Satan.

And why is it, that so many, while they do not drive Christ by mortal sin from their hearts, yet do not prepare a worthy habitation for Him? Because they do not meditate earnestly and frequently upon the words of the angel to the apostles, on the day of our Lord's ascension: "This Jesus shall so come again as you have seen Him going into heaven."

Scripture mentions a twofold coming of Christ upon the earth. One as *Redeemer*, which, in the fullness of time, has already taken place; the other at the end of the world, when, as *Judge*, He will demand of every soul an account of the manner in which the graces of redemption have been employed.

Hence we also speak of a twofold Advent. The first commenced in paradise with the promise of the Redeemer, and lasted till the Ascension; the second commenced with that day, and will last for each man in particular until death, when Christ will judge him, and for the whole human race together until the day of final reckoning.

Every one must, therefore, prepare himself in the time of Advent, so that when the Lord comes, he may be awake and ready. Hence the often repeated admonition of Christ and His Apostles: "Be prepared!"

But to know in what this preparation consists, we

need only think of what we do when we prepare ourselves for the arrival of an expected guest.

We first consider the person who is to come, his dignity, his importance; he may be a king, an emperor, or, perhaps, even the Pope himself. The second thought is of the relationship in which we stand to him; whether there are ties of love and friendship between us; whether he is a father, brother, friend, or benefactor from whom we have received all we possess, and to whom we owe the happiness of our life; whether he is a man on whose favor our entire future depends—a man to whom we are accountable, who holds in his hands our life, because he is the Judge who is to pass sentence upon us. How all this may be applied to Christ's coming, is evident.

Jesus, whom we expect, is the King of kings, the Lord of hosts, to whom all power in heaven and upon earth is given. He is the Father who bestowed upon us the right to be children of God, the Brother who divides with us his heritage of glory, the Friend who gave his life for us, the Benefactor from whom we have every gift of body and soul—for time and eternity; it is He who will be our Judge, and who will determine our future lot for all eternity. He who will be the Bridegroom of our souls, if He has dwelt in our hearts during our life here below.

With how much solicitude should we endeavor to employ our lives in such a manner that we may be prepared to receive Him with exultation when He comes!

While expecting some one we love, we carefully remove from our dwelling all that might be displeasing to him, and try to procure all that he likes and does him honor.

Applying this to the Advent of our life, I say:

Cleanse your heart, especially in this holy season, from all stain of sin. Fill it with fragrant thoughts of longing love, and adorn it with precious jewels of virtue, in order that you may say with David: "My heart is prepared!" Come, O Jesus my Saviour! Amen!

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?"—Matt. 11. 3.

A PERSON roused from sound slumber whilst darkness still envelops the earth, is unable to say what hour it is of the night. But if his wandering gaze discover through the casement the rosy tinge of early dawn, he knows well that day is at hand. And if the rays of the sun fall upon his couch, and brightness fill the chamber, he pauses not to ask: Art thou the sun, or shall we wait for another? It is day!

Day dawns for the soul when Christ approaches; Holy Writ calls Him "the Sun." He himself says that He is "the Light of the World." Let us consider to-day this office of Jesus Christ as the Sun and the Light of the world in connection with a threefold night and a threefold day. The threefold night to which I refer is: the night of sin—the night of death—and the night of the grave. He who changes this night into day is:

Christ, the Sun—on the day of conversion—at the hour of death—and on the day of judgment.

When Christ, the Sun, shines and diffuses His light in this threefold night, then the soul that loves Him

does not ask: Is it Thou? but she exultingly cries: It is Thou!

O Mary, thou Dawn of Morning on the firmament of salvation, pray for us, that the light of day illumine our souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Sin is a state of spiritual night. The sinner lives in darkness, and his deeds are deeds of darkness. But as soon as a true *conversion* of heart opens the way for Jesus into the benighted soul, the shadows of spiritual darkness vanish, and light diffuses there its glowing splendor. It suddenly becomes day; the soul begins to know herself, to understand the wretchedness of her former existence, and to see what is meant by a change of heart, a permanent one, such as the Lord demands of her.

She can hardly conceive how it was possible that she, a child of the Church, in the midst of a flood of light, could live in such blindness; how it was possible that, having been instructed in the faith from her youth, and having it before her eyes in its eternal greatness, she looked upon it as a thing of no consequence, and esteemed it so little. How is it possible that she lived without fear in so many and so great dangers—yes, even sought temptations and dallied with them—that professing a belief in hell, she continued to live in sin, not concerned, that at any moment,

by a sudden death, she might sink into the eternal flames of hell, if God withdrew his merciful hand?

The meaning of the words of Christ: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul," becomes all at once clear to the repenting sinner; he sees how vain is all striving and seeking after fortune, honor, and pleasure, with which the children of the world endeavor to satisfy the cravings of their hearts.

The scales fall from his eyes. He determines to follow Christ and to tread the path that leads to salvation. He looks upon his model and hears His assurance: "It is I!" Yea, it is He. It was He alone, the Light of the world, who could awaken and enlighten a soul that had slept and dreamed so many years in the night and darkness of sin.

Jesus, it is Thou! I follow Thee! What man, who after having led the life of a sinner, and become truly converted to God, will not acknowledge the truth of my words?

But now, Christian, put the question to yourself: Are you truly converted? Have you not lived, perhaps for many a long year, in the state of sin? Have you, blinded by the allurements and false light of this world, forgotten heaven for earth, and with the eternal truths of the Gospel ringing in your ears, been solicitous only to enjoy the goods, honors, and pleasures of this life? Happy are you, indeed, if day has already dawned on you! In gratitude for this priceless gift of conversion, walk henceforward as a child of light and

practise, with redoubled zeal, the works of grace. Preserve yourself from all dangers of a relapse, for, the night into which you would then sink would be still darker and more baneful, as Christ himself warns you: "The last state shall be worse than the first." Experience teaches us the truth of these words in regard to relapsing sinners.

The *second* night which Christ, the resplendent Sun of the world, changes into noon-day, is the *sad night of death.*

Good reason have we to speak of that night. The dying do not see, though their eyes are open; their pupils do not move, even though the light falls upon them. Thus veiled with the darkness of night is also the eye of their mind. They do not know all that the word "dying" implies, nor what follows that dread ordeal; horrible darkness and fearful gloom encompass them.

But how the night changes into day when Christ comes! Even the sinner then sees his soul by an unwonted light. The deeper the shadows of death gather on his mortal eyes, the clearer he recognizes the vanities of the world, the folly of his life, the thoughtlessness and frivolity with which he has wasted the precious hours. He sees now better than ever before the greatness and multitude of his sins. Christ approaches, daylight breaks upon his soul—but only to reveal the horror of his state.

How differently does Christ, the Sun, brighten the night of death for the just, whose light He has been

upon the path of life. Listen to what is told of the death of a saintly hermit:

As he lay upon his death-bed, surrounded by a number of other hermits who wished to witness his happy release, his face suddenly shone with a strange light, and he said softly: "Behold the choir of Patriarchs comes to meet me." After a little while he spoke again: "Behold the choir of Prophets comes," and a still brighter light rested on his countenance. Not long after he said with tremulous joy: "The Apostles of Christ are here, and wish to take me with them." When he again moved his lips, and they asked him to whom he was speaking, he replied: "The angels are here and invite me to go with them; but I have begged them to leave me a little longer here below that I may do penance." One of the elder hermits said to him: "Holy father, you need do no more penance." And lo! the face of the dying man beamed still brighter, and saying exultingly: "Behold, Christ comes!" he gave up his soul unto the Lord at the dawn of eternal day.

Yes, if Christ during our life has been the Sun in whose light we have been walking, then He will also change the night of our death into a day of consolation.

The third night is the night of the grave. A well-known Easter hymn says:

> "Short is for me the dismal night,
> Until the angel calls: 'Tis light!"

That the stillness of the grave resembles the night,

needs no illustration, nor that day everlasting dawns when the trumpet of the angel sounds, and Christ, the Sun, appears as our Judge, and a supernatural light illuminates the book of conscience of angels and of men.

But how different on that day is the effect of that light! "Ye mountains! fall upon us, and ye hills, cover us!" Thus at the left of the judgment-seat of Christ, the all-knowing Judge, the reprobate will cry in shame and despair.

But what happiness will fill the just at His right hand, when their virtues and their victories are revealed to the whole world, and they enter with the children of God into the kingdom of eternal reward, that kingdom, whose day knows no evening, and where Christ, the Sun, shines in everlasting glory! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen."—Matt. 11, 4.

BY the fall of Adam the whole human family lost its right to heaven, the end and aim of that supernatural life to which we had been raised in the person of our head. But in the designs of God we were all to be redeemed through the merits of the Word made flesh, and have all our sins forgiven, yea, all our sins. Not only were we supplied with a remedy against original sin in the laver of baptism, but we were also put in a condition to have subsequent actual sins blotted out through the merits of our Saviour, if we would but return to God, and use the means that Christ left in charge of His Church for the remission of sin. Whoever departs from this life in the state of sanctifying grace, which is always bestowed when sins are forgiven, enters heaven a fully redeemed soul.

It is a great pity that few preserve the grace of baptism till the end of their lives, and a still greater pity that many, who have had the misfortune to offend God by personal sin after baptism, do not receive the Sacrament of penance worthily. Their reconciliation with God is only a deception. They confess, and remain what they were before confession—sinners. They promise with their mouths, but how soon after confession one could ask: Is it you, who was lately converted? The

promise of a reform made to the minister of Christ in the confessional was only self-delusion. Your confession has not healed your soul, it was only a new sacrilege.

The question is, therefore: What is the surest sign of a good confession, and of a true reconciliation with God? I reply: The words of Christ in to-day's Gospel point it out: "Relate to John: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again."

Let us, therefore, consider the spiritual significance of these miracles as tokens and evidences of a true conversion and reconciliation with God.

Mary, Mother of mercy, refuge of sinners, pray that God may grant us the grace of a worthy confession, and that by our reformed life we may prove our reconciliation to God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Relate to John: "*The blind see.*" The sinner passes his days in blindness. Christ on the cross prayed for sinners, saying: "Father, they know not what they do." This is the case, especially, of the Christian sinner. He becomes blind. He believes all that faith teaches him concerning his end and destiny and the path of salvation; about the horror of sin, the dangers of delay, the last judgment, and the eternal consequences of sin—and still he is, in effect, blind to these truths. He gazes upon them all with the eyes of his mind, but they have

no influence on him; it is as if he saw them not at all. But how different it is when, by a true conversion to God, the scales fall from his eyes! Then how distinctly he sees all these truths in their eternal grandeur! He can not understand how the transparent wiles of Satan could so delude him that, with faith in his heart, he yet lived year after year in sin.

Now he sees the presumption and folly of his sinful life. Now he sees the path of salvation clearly, and understands what he has to do to save his soul and live a life pleasing to God. The blind—they see!

Is that the case with you, converted sinner? If so, thank God; you have made a worthy confession.

Relate to John: "*The deaf hear.*" God continually calls on the sinner to do penance and reform. He admonishes him by His own word, and by the exhortation and example of his brethren. He reproves and warns him by accidents, by death, by misfortunes of various kinds, and by interior enlightenment and inspiration. But the sinner, clinging to his passions, remains deaf. All these admonitions reach the ear of his mind to as little purpose as if he did not hear them at all. Let a preacher or confessor speak to him ever so impressively, the words do not enter his heart.

How different, on the contrary, are the feelings of him who at last opens his heart to the call of grace urging him to conversion and penitence!

The exhortation of the priest finds a ready entrance to his soul; he heeds the admonition and advice of the minister of God.

Now he who formerly was deaf to the thunder of the divine threats, becomes conscious of the soft voice of heavenly inspirations which invite him to purchase back by zeal in the practice of virtue that time, which he lost and wasted by his former sinful life. The deaf hear!

Converted sinner! is that your case? Have you been deaf? Have you confessed and opened the ear of your heart? Do you now hear the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, who invites you to perfect yourself in Christian justice? You hear? Thank God that you have confessed worthily.

Relate to John: "*The lame walk.*" The sinner, who confesses either from habit or because he has no choice in the matter—remains lame.

His confessor, no doubt, instructs him on the means which he must employ not to offend God and to grow daily in virtue; the sinner, however, not really anxious to be converted, listens, promises to fulfill the duties of his station as a zealous Christian—but does not fulfill his promise. After confession he does not say his morning or evening prayers more frequently; he neglects, as before, to hear mass; he does not receive the holy Sacraments oftener than formerly; he does not have an eye to the conduct of his children, or of those whom God has placed in his charge. He remains lame!

But how differently does he live who has been truly converted! He commences an entirely different life, and becomes an example to others by the solicitude he evinces to save his soul. The lame walk!

Converted sinner! is that your case? Have you

been lame, and can you now after your confession say: "The charity of Christ presseth me?" (2 Cor. 5, 14). Can you now affirm: Lord, since I have made peace with Thee, "I have gone the ways of Thy law." If so, give thanks to God; thou hast, without doubt, made a worthy confession.

Relate to John: "*The dead rise again, the lepers are cleansed, the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" Were you spiritually dead through mortal sin? Have you arisen? Have you never since you made a general confession grievously offended God? Has it really been your earnest endeavor to preserve yourself from the stains of venial sins? Are you cleansed from the leprosy of entirely voluntary imperfections? And you, who in bygone days gave scandal through your sinful conduct, are you now the good odor of the Lord, to the edification of all those around you? and do you endeavor to convert and sanctify them?—Give thanks to God—for, you have confessed worthily.

We can, with right, apply the words of David to such a conversion: "This is the change of the right hand of the Most High" (Ps. 76, 11). These effects are moral miracles, not less wonderful than the sudden healing of bodily diseases. Rather they are still more admirable. St. Augustine is right when he says, that the conversion of a sinner is a greater miracle than that recorded in Genesis: "God said: Let there be light!—and there was light."

Nothingness could not oppose Omnipotence. The will of man could, for God made him free. In the cre-

ation of the world the will of God alone acted, but in the conversion of a sinner it is necessary that a human will co-operate. This becomes still clearer when we compare, as we have done, the cure of physical and spiritual blindness, deafness and lameness.

It is for this reason that, after a conversion, we hear people say: I never should have believed that this person would be converted; it is a miracle! And so it is. —These miracles are the fruits of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, and will bear testimony to the divinity of His mission until the end of time.—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"What went you out to see? A reed shaken with the wind?"—Matt. 11, 7.

AS to-day's Gospel testifies, Christ was asked a question: "Art thou He?" But He, in turn, put questions to His interlocutors, His first question being:

"What went you out to see? A reed shaken with the wind?"

A reed is, as the words of Christ Himself imply, the emblem of inconstancy and thoughtlessness. How important this question of Christ is to each of us! The answer which Christ sent by the disciples of John to their master signified, that He was really the promised Messiah, who had come to save mankind. Now, what can be the principal cause that the fruit of His redemption is lost even to many who, cleansed from their sins in baptism, have become children of the Church; or to those who, having sinned as children of the Church, have regained the state of sanctifying grace?

I answer: *Man's instability of purpose and faithlessness in keeping his promises. There are in this regard, especially, four different classes of moral reeds.*

What these are is the question which I shall answer to-day.

O Mary, thou who didst stand under the Cross, and didst crush the serpent's head; brave woman, whom

the Holy Ghost called blessed, obtain for us the constancy of true children of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The Gospel narrative of to-day exemplifies, in the many questions recorded, a remarkable trait of our nature. Man is instinctively given to questioning, and to seek for information, even concerning things that have for him no special interest. Children exhibit this propensity in a wonderful degree. No sooner do they commence to talk than the process of questioning is begun: "Father—mother, what is that? For what is this used?" How often have you yourself, from the days of your childhood, interrogated others? There is only one question man seldom asks himself with due earnestness, and it is the most momentous of all, namely: "Who am I? How do I live? What will become of me?"

Men often reach an advanced age, say of seventy or eighty years; they have, in the course of their lives, asked numberless questions; they have become learned men, renowned politicians, great statesmen, influential merchants, and yet leave this world without having ever put to themselves that important question: Who am I?

A Christian, especially, should ask himself over and over again: In what state is my soul? Am I, perhaps, a reed? Am I constant in the service of God?

As I said before, thoughtlessness and inconstancy

are the cause why so many of those who once lived in the state of grace have abandoned the path of salvation, and are lost. An emblem of this was the reed with which Christ, scourged and crowned with thorns, appeared before the people on Good Friday. Had not this same people who then filled the air with shouts of: "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" gone out six days before to meet Him, crying: "Hosanna! blessed is He who cometh!"

Should any one ask me: In comparing to reeds the different characters of men and their way of living, how many classes might be enumerated? I would answer: There are chiefly four: the *impenitent*—the *relapsing*—the *light-minded*—the *despondent*. To all of these the words of the Wise Man are addressed: "Winnow not with every wind, and go not into every way" (Eccles. 5, 11).

I say that the first class of these reeds is composed of *impenitent sinners*. Even these are sometimes moved. They feel the need of conversion, particularly when a death among their relations or friends occurs, or when they themselves are dangerously ill, or when they see their companions in sin awakened by the grace of God and converted.

If they still visit the church, they are sometimes moved by a powerful sermon. Perhaps, even at this moment, such reeds are before me; they are resolving within themselves, to change their sinful life; and yet, they scarcely will have left the church, when another wind will blow, and then, instead of fini h

ing their conversion by a thorough confession, they will allow themselves to be deluded by their companions, and will commit, even to-day, another mortal sin.

Impenitent sinner! you who are here before my eyes! lay your hand upon your heart and ask yourself whether I am right. Have you not more than once said to yourself: I will change my life, else I am lost for all eternity? You were, perhaps, already half-way to the church. Yes, many a one even stands before the confessional, but, losing patience at waiting so long, he leaves the church, postpones his confession, and remains, what he was—a sinner!

The wind that turns this reed, is the wind of a worldly spirit, pressure of business, the example of others, the society of his equals, the thought: I will do it later, I am young yet, a man can always be converted. He does not think of the continually growing power of passion, that sins have their measure, that God can forsake us and withdraw grace from us. He hopes to live for a long time yet, and lo! suddenly death breaks the reed; the sinner dies and is lost.

The second class of reeds are the *relapsing sinners*. The sinner, we suppose, carries into effect his resolution—he goes to confession—he confesses worthily and is reconciled to God. But how fares it with his constancy? Alas! numberless are the relapsing sinners! How few Christians would be lost if, after confession, they did not fall again into mortal sin! The

wind that turns these reeds, is the wind of temptations and of occasions to commit sin, which they do not avoid because they think themselves strong. It is carelessness in resisting temptation at the very first moment, and in not making use of the armor which the Apostle recommends in order that we may conquer in the struggle against the enemies of salvation: the world, the flesh and hell.

Christ, as a warning to these reeds, said: "The evil spirit compelled to leave one dwelling, retires into the wilderness." This means: he leaves the sinner for a short time in peace; for he knows that the sinner, in his new zeal, would withstand every temptation. But after a time he returns, bringing along seven worse spirits than himself, and endeavors to find an entrance into his former dwelling; and should he succeed, then is the last state worse than the first.

The third class of reeds are the *light-minded*, who, though they take good care not to commit mortal sin, are full of good intentions; yes, they are even determined to walk in the path of sanctity, but remain nevertheless the same imperfect beings, soiled with numberless voluntary venial sins.

In fact, instead of going onward, they retrograde in the path of sanctity and become more and more negligent. The wind that turns these reeds, is the wind of carelessness and imprudence, especially in their intercourse with people who are animated more by the spirit of the world than the spirit of piety—the wind of frivolity, which makes them shorten and slur over

their prayers, neglect the frequent reception of the sacraments, immerse their whole souls in worldly interests, and rush heedlessly into amusement and dissipation.

The fourth class of reeds are the *despondent*, who, from want of trust in God, make resolutions only to break them.

The wind which turn these reeds hither and thither are the numberless scruples and doubts with which the evil spirit tortures and deludes them. Such reeds are also in danger of being broken by the pressure of despair.

God grant us grace that we may not belong to any of these reeds, but may walk before the Lord with the determination and faithfulness of St. John! Amen!

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."—John 1.

THE time of Advent should, according to the intention and desire of the Church, be employed in preparing a way for the Lord in our hearts, that we may walk in His paths with renewed zeal as true children of the Church. Our first and most constant endeavor in this regard should be to open our hearts to all the graces designed from the beginning for our sanctification, on the condition that we would voluntarily receive them and co-operate with them. "By the grace of God," says St. Paul, "I am what I am" (1 Cor 15, 10).

We are, as the same Apostle maintains, not able, by our own power, even to pronounce the name of Jesus meritoriously. I shall to-day apply the words of St. John: "I am the voice of one crying," to the holy inspiration of divine grace. We, on our side, should devoutly listen to them, and humbly receive them in our hearts.

Why, then, is it that we either do not hear this call of divine grace at all, or hear it so indistinctly that it makes but a very slight, if any, impression on our hearts?

This question I shall answer in to-day's sermon.

O Mary, pray for us; that we, following thy example, may listen to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and profit by them!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." In order to hear this voice, we must be alive, not dead! What bearing has this on my subject?

I answer: The soul must be in a state of sanctifying grace, must be spiritually alive, that she may hear the divine call. Sinners who habitually live in mortal sin, are spiritually dead. That such souls may listen to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost inviting them to a life of perfection by the imitation of Christ, it is necessary that they first, through the mercy of God and a miracle of grace, hear the call to repentance, and have recourse to the Sacrament of penance, where, by the infusion of sanctifying grace, they are restored to a spiritual life.

Perhaps even now, there may be before me in this Church many a soul spiritually dead; let the call of the Holy Ghost through my voice now penetrate and rouse them: Make your peace with God, confess during this Advent, this time of grace; do not delay, otherwise these days will prove to you no days of grace!

"I am the voice of one crying." One may be alive, the call may be loud, and yet unheard. *The listeners are too far off.*

A man may not hear the inspirations of the Holy

Ghost, because he is too far away from that perfect life to which we all, as Christians, are called. If there is one thing of which a Christian only in name does not think, it is his duty to follow the example of the saints, and strive with heroic zeal for true perfection; in other words, to live a holy life in order to become a saint. A Christian only in name, is content to preserve his conscience free from mortal sin, and, perhaps, even from gross venial sin; but it may be that during his whole life he does not once think of striving after any thing higher.

Have you ever thought earnestly of using all the means of grace which God has given you, as a child of His Church, to ascend the mountain of perfection, to become holy? This mountain will forever remain in the far distance for such a Christian. He remains on the high-road where walk the children of the world. If, by chance, he hears the voice of the Holy Ghost, he pays no attention to it. These inspirations are unheeded by the ear of his mind, they do not pierce into his heart, they remain ineffective.

"I am the voice of one crying." Even a loud call is sometimes not heard at a distance. Why? *Our hearing is not good. An affection, perhaps the result of a cold, has weakened the organs.* All we hear is a dull, continuous sound. How can we apply this to the spiritual life? I answer: A man in profuse perspiration, who ventures into a draught, takes cold. Man perspires spiritually in working and caring for this world, and is frequently exposed to the draught of worldliness.

When we have taken cold spiritually we can not possibly hear distinctly the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. The hollow sound which we mistake for them is the clamor and noise of the world, bustling and surging in tumultuous pursuit of pleasure and riches. The lukewarm Christian is fond of the world's excitement and din. His ears are not disposed to hear the whispers of divine grace. His mind is too full of earth-born projects and wishes to take in the high meaning of heavenly inspirations.

"I am the voice of one crying." Somebody calls us. We do not hear him. Why? Because our sense of hearing is no longer *delicate;* we have *become old!*

It happens to nearly every preacher who has for many years announced the word of God, that he is told by persons listening to him again after a very long interval: You do not preach so loud as when I heard you formerly at this or that place. In such a case, I reply: Friend, I preach still louder, but your hearing is not so good as it used to be. Then comes the reflection: Yes; you are right. I do not hear so distinctly as formerly; I am growing old.

What application can we make of this phenomenon to spiritual hearing? We grow hard of hearing from the effect of *habit.* We have grown old in the spirit of the world; our perceptions have been dulled. The inspirations of grace make no impression.

"I am the voice of one crying." We frequently do not hear very loud calls. Why? *Because we are just then speaking or listening to some one else.* Too

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many around us are speaking at the same time, and we can hardly hear what we ourselves say. What is this hinderance in regard to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost? Whence the noise that drowns all the calls of conscience and of grace?

I say: We need only look at the characteristic virtues of St. John in the wilderness, to learn whence the tumult proceeds.

St. John lived alone; the lukewarm Christian loves lively company and its ceaseless wrangle and contention. No wonder that his ears are distracted by the noise.

St. John lived in the wilderness entirely devoted to prayer. The careless Christian prays but seldom, and then without concentration of thought. Even in its holiest moods his mind is more occupied with thoughts of the world than with thoughts of God. There is a deafening noise in the ears of his mind.

St. John lived a life of mortification. The nominal Christian seeks ease and pleasure. No wonder that the noise of the tumult drowns the soft voice of the Holy Ghost, and that His inspirations are not heard.

Were our conduct different, did we seek the society of others only as far as duty or brotherly love required, were we to bridle our tongue and not indulge in gossip and unnecessary conversation about the faults and short-comings of our neighbors, did we endeavor to walk in the presence of God with a recollected mind and betake ourselves zealously to prayer, did we care for temporal things only as the Lord's prayer advises

us: "Give us this day our daily bread," were we not so fond of noisy, distracting amusements; then the inspirations of the Holy Ghost would daily become more frequent as well as more distinct, and advance us rapidly on the path of perfection. Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Who art thou?—what sayest thou of thyself?"—John I.

THAT which bars the way of the Lord into our hearts, and prevents his approach—is sin. The means to remove this obstacle from our hearts is, as is known to all well-instructed Christians—a worthy confession. That it may become clear to us what the condition of a worthy and efficacious confession are, I apply to this subject the question we find in to-day's Gospel: "Who art thou?" Were all who approach the Sacrament of Penance to show themselves to the minister of Christ as they really are, and if their confession had all the other requisites, then all who confess would be really reconciled to God, and would truly prepare a way for Him to their hearts. Unfortunately, this is too frequently not the case.

We confess, but the rubbish of sin remains on the path of life. Why? Our confessions are only deceptions. Why deceptions?

I shall answer this question to-day.

I speak the more urgently upon this subject, as every Christian who cares in the least for his salvation should, at this season of Advent and of the nativity of our Lord, prepare himself for a worthy reception of the Holy Sacraments.

O Mary, mother of mercy, pray for us, that our

confessions may be sincere, and that, through the merits of Christ, we may be reconciled to our Father in heaven!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Who art thou? what sayest thou of thyself?" What application have these questions to the sinner who confesses? The direct answer is this:

Man, in the confessional, must *accuse* and not *excuse* himself, as is done by many who have not confessed for a length of time. These excuses, because they are false, render the confession, perhaps, entirely worthless. A person desirous of justifying himself to his confessor lays the blame on circumstances which in no way excuse him, at least not from compliance with obligations as important as his Easter duties. Hence the neglect of such duties ought to be confessed without excuse.

How many, instead of speaking of their own sins, and accusing themselves, commence at once to blame others and so speak of the faults of their neighbors! Sinner, sweep before your own door! Leave to others the confession of their sins and think only of your own.

Why are so many confessions defective? First, from a want of self-knowledge. Surely, every one ought to know what is sin and what not, and be able to distinguish between mortal and venial sin. Yet how often does it happen that the priest by questioning draws out the avowal of long-standing irregularities; and if he asks: Why have you not confessed this before? receives the

answer: I was not aware that it is wrong, or that it is a mortal sin. Now, when such ignorance is the result of blameworthy carelessness or indifference, it is never an excuse, and the neglect of proper instruction is itself morally wrong.

Very often when the penitent says in extenuation of his conduct: "I did not know it was a sin," he is uttering nothing less than a falsehood to deceive the confessor and incline him to leniency. This is especially the case in regard to sins against the sixth commandment, sins of impurity, for, if the confessor questions further: Would you not have been ashamed if others had seen you, or heard of your actions,—then the penitent feels and acknowledges that he was well aware of the sinfulness of his doings, and that he only excused himself because he was ashamed to confess them without reserve.

Secondly.—People do not accuse themselves fully in confession, because they have not thoroughly examined their conscience in regard to their thoughts, words, desires, deeds, and omissions, the scandal they may have given, their complicity in the sins of others. How many parents are there who do not examine themselves carefully in regard to the omissions of which they are guilty in the education of their children, and hence do not accuse themselves sufficiently!

Certainly, every true Christian ought to know whether he has committed a mortal sin or not, and should know the state of his conscience, so that in case of need he could confess without delay. But, unfortunately, most men are not in this condition. They are not so solicitous

about their salvation as to make it impossible for them to forget a mortal sin, if they are weak enough to commit one. Very many people postpone confession even when they are conscious of having fallen into grievous sin, and afterwards forget it. Hence the duty and necessity of a careful examination of conscience before entering the confessional. Not only should we thoroughly examine ourselves in regard to our deeds, but also concerning sins of thought, desire, omission, in regard to the capital sins as well as the commandments of God and of His Church.

Thirdly.—We confess, but do not mention those circumstances that alter the species of the sin. Neither do we—at least as nearly as it is possible—mention how often the sin has been committed, or at least approximately, how often in a day, week, or month, in what different ways, and whether by it we have given scandal to others.

Fourthly.—There is especially a want of true contrition and of earnest resolution to avoid every occasion of sin and to use all means at our disposal to resist temptation. This defect is by far the most dangerous as well as the most common.

We perhaps repent of our sins, but this repentance has only a worldly or temporal motive, that is, the evil consequences of sin in this world. But such a repentance is not sufficient for our true reconciliation with God through the Sacrament of Penance. It must be a repentance from motives suggested to us by faith, as, because we have offended God and deserve the punishment with

which He has threatened the sinner for time and eternity. It must be a repentance which particularly manifests itself in the earnest resolution to avoid not only sin at any cost, but also every occasion that may lead to it, mindful of the words of Christ: "If thy eye scandalize thee pluck it out, and cast it from thee: and if thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off." Such a resolution, not tears, show that we truly repent of and despise sin. If this be the case, we may be certain that the sinner confesses his sins sincerely, and does not conceal any thing.

Fifthly.—We confess, and yet conceal a mortal sin. Why? We are ashamed, and forget the words which St. Chrysostom addresses to the sinner: "To sin is a shame, but to confess sin honors the priest and the penitent."

You say to yourself: What will the priest think of me, if I tell him every thing? I say: He will give thanks to God for having inspired you with so much humility and confidence as to open your heart to him without reserve; he will be happy at having the power and occasion to restore you to the friendship of God.

Sixthly.—The practice of frequent confession is neglected. There can be no doubt that by often having recourse to the holy tribunal of penance we considerably reduce the difficulty of self-accusation and acquire the habit of doing it with the proper dispositions.

In conclusion, I would ask you: "Who are you, and what do you say of yourself?" Do you accuse yourself in the confessional in the way I have advised you? If not, what is the cause? I answer: You are in want

of the humility of St. John, who said: "I am not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoes." You need this humility before the minister of Christ in the Sacrament of Penance. Follow the example of St. John the Baptist in humbling yourself, and you will fulfill all the conditions necessary to receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily, and find grace before God.

THIRD SERMON.

"The same is He that shall come after me, the latchet of whose shoe I am not worthy to loose."—John 1.

AS is seen in to-day's Gospel, the avowal of St. John to the priests and Levites sent to him by the Jews, was twofold. He confesses with humility, but with earnestness and full consciousness of his duties in regard to Christ, that he has been sent to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. Not less openly does he declare and confess who this Messiah is, although he fully recognizes the wickedness and hypocrisy of those who question him. His mind recurs to the prophecies of Holy Writ. He feels that he is in the presence of those who will one day be the Redeemer's murderers; and yet he declares that he is not worthy to loose the latchet of His shoe.

John's testimony was *fearless*, *cheerful*, *decided*, and *true* unto death. Such was his confession as the precursor of Christ; *Our confession as followers of Christ, should have the same characteristics which distinguished the testimony of St. John the Baptist.* Let me prove this to-day.

O Mary, who, beneath the cross, before the Jews and murderers of thy divine Son, didst avow thyself His Mother, grant that we, imitating St. John, may confess Christ before God and the whole world as our Lord and Redeemer!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"You will give testimony of me." These words Christ addresses to every child of His Church, and their testimony should be like that of St. John.

St. John confessed Christ, and his confession was *fearless*. The holy precursor was a man full of courage and determination, free from all fear of men.

Fear of men! what a dangerous rock on which the most tried virtue is often wrecked. Fear of men! what a dangerous state of mind, and how many does it make traitors to Christ and His Church! The history of the passion of our Lord gives us an instance. Pilate was completely convinced of the innocence of Christ, but fear of men, fear to displease the emperor, induced him, against his own convictions, to condemn the Saviour to death on the cross. As it was then, so it is at this day, and so it will be until the end of the world.

We see men who persecute and condemn Christ and His holy Church, nay, who would even lend a helping hand to destroy her entirely, were it possible, who yet, even while acting thus, are fully aware of the wrong they are doing! They are afraid of the opinion of the world, afraid to lose the favor of those on whom their temporal welfare depends. This is especially the case at the present day. Beginning with the highest officials, ministers of state, to artisans and servants, everywhere we perceive that the fear of men is the bane of good intentions.

Even kings and emperors wage war against the Church. Their conscience rebels, but they are driven to the wall by fear of men, fear lest they should displease some turbulent subjects whom irreligion is hurrying along on the road to perdition. This same evil, this contemptible fear of men, crops up over and over again in private life. Men often walk in the path of sin, which they formerly avoided and despised. Consideration for others, fear to displease men, induces them to take the downward road.

And even, if they do not commit glaring sins, human respect makes them at any rate lukewarm Christians, and thus causes incalculable loss. The effects of these influences are daily experienced. Thus, sons or daughters have the happiness to possess pious parents, who accustomed them early to live as good Christians and fulfill the duties of their religion. As long as they remained at home they said their morning and evening prayers, and went to Mass during the week. After their first Communion they are withdrawn from parental supervision and thrown into society, where religion is at a discount, or where, perhaps, piety is execrated. They now rise late and neglect their morning prayers; they are ashamed to kneel down in the presence of those who do not pray, and who, perhaps, scoff at those who do. In time they go still further; dispensing with Mass, they go with others to places of amusement, until at length they give over receiving the holy Sacraments, and live like heathens. What is to blame? It is the fear of man; the fear to displease others, or,

to speak plainly, the desire to please men rather than God.

Let us cast a look into the family life. What has prevented this woman, who, as a maiden, was so pious, from continuing in the same holy dispositions after marriage? I answer: It is fear of man. Her husband, perhaps, gives her to understand that he does not approve of her going to church, of receiving the Sacraments so frequently, of assisting at so many devotional exercises. He desires her, instead of going to church on Sundays and holydays, to accompany him in his rides and promenades, and to assist at balls, concerts, and theatrical representations. She might persuade him, with a few well chosen words, to let her go, or even to accompany her; but the fear of displeasing him—a fear not so strong in temporal matters—deprives her of all courage. Instead of sanctifying her husband, as in duty bound, she allows herself to be gradually robbed of her spirit of piety, and, we may add, of her greatest womanly charms.

And yet how easy it would be to break loose from the slavish fear of man, were we to bear in mind the words of the Apostles before the council: "If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye" (Acts 4, 19).

Child of the Church, think: What is man, in comparison with Christ, the Son of God, who became Man for us?

Man of himself is nothing; God condescended to call him into existence, and had He not as Creator placed

the earth under his feet, he would not even be able to stand. Man of himself is nothing and has nothing. He knows not if he will be still alive the next moment, or what will happen to him if he dies. He only knows that he will soon stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and hear from His lips the sentence that will decide his fate for eternity. If Christ be with us, how can the displeasure of man injure us?

Especially now, after nineteen hundred years, during which time the Church has continually fought and conquered, we need no longer fear. Millions and millions, by the help of Christ, have been true children of the Church militant, and, after the example of numberless saints, have struggled and conquered, and are now crowned as victors in the communion of the saints with Christ in heaven! Let us, uniting ourselves with them, give to Christ and His holy Church, in our day, a fearless adhesion.

The confession of St. John was also a cheerful one; such should ours be also, in the consciousness that we have the happiness of belonging to the one true and saving Church. As her zealous children we taste already on earth that peace which Christ has promised his followers. And if it is the Lord's good pleasure that we endure tribulation and affliction, ought we not to be consoled by the thought of that happy eternity which is given as a reward to all those who have endured patiently, in union with their suffering Master, the trials of this world?

Lastly, the confession of St. John was also resolute,

and true unto the end. With us Christians, as Tertullian well remarked, it does not matter so much how we begin as how we end.

For this reason it is especially necessary that we confess Christ and His Church with that resolution which knows no compromise between the true and the false, duty and transgression; which says to the enemies of the kingdom of God with the great Pius: "Non possumus." I can not, I dare not, I will not. Such decision intimidates our enemies, and drives Satan away; for he dares not tempt us, through fear lest new victories enhance the brightness of our crown.

Christians! Let us ever bear in mind the example of the holy Precursor, and never be slow or irresolute in the confession of Christ. Amen!

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."—Luke 3.

ADVENT reminds us of the ages when mankind were in expectation of the Redeemer. The many millions of souls who lived upon the earth during that long period had for their anchor of salvation hope in Christ, the promised Saviour of the world. Reflecting on this dispensation of Providence, we are put in mind of the necessity of a virtue that is as necessary for salvation as faith itself. "We are saved by hope," says St. Paul. This truth we ought to ponder the more earnestly, because many children of the Church seem not to bear it sufficiently in mind. We shall, therefore, consider:

The power and unction of holy hope to lead us on sweetly in the path of salvation.

O Mary, mother of holy hope, as the sacred Scriptures call thee, obtain for us that entire, that unmovable, confidence in God that filled thy own soul!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"We are saved by hope." The history of the four thousand years that elapsed before the coming of Christ

bears the same testimony. The tradition of promises made to Adam and the Patriarchs, the predictions of the Prophets, the temporary dispersion of the Jewish people, combined to keep alive, among all people, the expectation of a Redeemer; and whoever were saved received into their hearts, from above, the grace of hope in His merits. But not less necessary is hope in our day; and the Church, amid the tempests that assailed her from the first, has ever made hope in Christ the anchor of her safety.

The Church is immovably fixed upon the rock of faith; and they who stand on the ramparts to drive back the foe, fix their eyes upon heaven, sure in the hour of need to receive assistance from Him who said: "Behold I am with you until the end of the world." "The gates of hell shall never prevail against her"—the Church. Their confidence is their strength; and, hence, they never quail before the enemy, powerful or insolent as, for the moment, he may be.

What a striking confirmation of this trust the Supreme Pontiffs have given in this our day, when the waves of persecution beat against the very walls of the Vatican!

Pius IX. used often to exclaim: "Help will come; the Lord will not forsake His Church. You may come, and rob me of all my possessions; but the Church will remain intact. Drive me from Rome, if you will, the Church is not thereby destroyed; for where I am there is the Church." Not otherwise feels, hopes and speaks Leo, his successor. Behold how firmly the Church of

Christ is fixed on the rock! But no less necessary is hope for every child of the Church. This becomes evident if we consider the conditions of a really Christian life, and the assistance that hope gives to acquire the high sanctity which that life demands.

The saints attained to their eminent sanctity because in them were present the following four characteristics: *Light—courage—strength—perseverance.*

First.—*Light* to know the will of God, to discover the vocation in which He wishes us to serve Him, as well as what particular actions He requires of us, and the manner in which they are to be performed.

The saints clearly understood what God wished of them. How plainly St. John the Baptist saw his way! How unhesitatingly the Apostles followed their course! The same was the case with all the saints, as their lives reveal. Let us especially consider the founders of religious orders. St. Ignatius understood, from the meditation on the two standards, *why* God had chosen him to establish the Society of Jesus; while St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Dominick, and the many other founders of religious orders, in a similar manner, recognized the will of God.

What made the saints saints? They were filled with *courage!* They were heroes! It is not enough to recognize the will of God, we must also accomplish it; but for this we need courage to make heroic resolutions, and courage to keep them, as the saints have done. St. John was not afraid to go into the wilderness when yet but a boy.

What made saints saints? They were *giants* in virtue! The strength of grace, which enables man to do every thing, was within them! We feel, but too often, that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Lastly.—The saints remained *true till the end.* That is what St. Francis insisted on so frequently, who used to ask: "What difference is there between the saints and the damned?" and he would answer: "The saint made promises and kept them; the damned made promises and broke them."

Oh, how we are in want of light, courage, strength and constancy in following the saints! And why are we so weak? I answer: We have not the strength of holy hope which filled their hearts. We are, too often, as St. Paul complains: "Children of distrust." Hope gives light! Behold a ship in a storm. The captain is in despair; he knows not what to do, and cries: We are lost! A passenger, who has once been himself a captain, exclaims: No, we are not lost; follow my orders! Do this; do that! He saves the ship! A desponding soul does not know what to do for her salvation. She does not feel the guiding influence of holy hope, and hence is without light.

Hopes give courage! Think of soldiers on a battlefield. As long as they hope to be victorious, they fight bravely; but, when hope leaves them, they flee. A despondent soul too easily loses courage in the service of God, and in the struggle with temptations. A soul that hopes in God, and trusts in His helping hand, fights bravely.

Hope gives strength! What is not a man able to do when encompassed by a conflagration that threatens his life? He hopes to save himself still, and evinces more than human strength. A soul that hopes feels itself strong in the path of salvation, and cries with David: "Through my God I shall go over a wall" (Ps. 17, 30). A despondent soul feels itself powerless.

Hope gives perseverance! Think of Columbus, the discoverer of America. All lose hope, all despair; Columbus alone hopes, and lo! from the topmast resounds the cry: Land! The hopeful soul cries with David: "I have hoped in Thee, O Lord; I shall not be confounded." "Hope confoundeth not," says Holy Writ (Rom. 5, 5). God Himself assures us: "Because he hoped in me, I will deliver him" (Ps. 90, 14). Happy the mortal who, in his dying hour, resigns his soul with aspirations of holy hope into the hands of God. He is saved; for Holy Writ says: "No one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded" (Eccl. 2, 11). In what danger, however, is a dejected soul when, at its departure from this life, Satan becomes its assailant.

Hence appears the blindness of those who, returning to God after a sinful life, recoil from every temptation against faith, but listen with a kind of moody satisfaction to suggestions against God's goodness and mercy.

Let us rather encourage within us the sweet whisperings of holy hope; and turn our eyes to heaven, whither she points, and the rewards of a blissful eternity! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord."—Luke 3.

"HE who created thee without thee, and redeemed thee without thee, will not save thee without thee," says St. Augustine.

The holy doctor means that God is willing to save us by placing the means at our disposal, but that He also demands of us to open our hearts to Him, and accept the help that He offers us. Holy Writ often compares our life to a journey. And not without reason; for we are not in this world as in our home, but must journey on to eternity.—The mission of St. John, of whom we read so frequently in the Gospels of this holy season, is a forcible reminder that we must not fail to do our share in the work of salvation. He was, according to the testimony of Christ Himself, the angel of whom it was written, that he would prepare the way of the Lord.

In what this preparation should consist, St. John tells us in the words: "Every valley shall be filled: and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain."

Let us to-day consider what these words of St. John mean in regard to the dispensation of grace and our co-operation with the same.

O Mary, whose correspondence with grace was

more perfect than that of any other creature, pray that we may follow thy example and prepare the way for the Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Every valley shall be filled." What valleys are those, which in the path of our salvation obstruct the way of the Lord, hinder His approach, and prevent us from profiting by that divine grace which He bestows upon us? I answer: It is the *spirit of the world.* It is longing and striving after things here below, after earthly possessions. It is the neglect of the great and only necessary occupation, that of our salvation, the forgetfulness of our last end, the pursuit of the possessions and joys of this temporal life, the inordinate temporal cares, and the wish to satisfy our desire for sensual pleasures. What valleys, ravines, and abysses does not this disposition of the heart produce!

We can see this spirit in the restlessness, ceaseless striving of the children of the world all over the earth. Unhappily, there are also many children of the Church who, in this regard, can not be distinguished from the heathen. Ask yourself: Is not this the truth? Are you not infinitely more anxious for your temporal than for your eternal welfare? No wonder that your heart is without all softer feeling, that you feel so little enlightened and strengthened in the path of salvation.

Oh, how different would it be, were you to think more of your last end, were you to live for it, pray and

work for it, and had at each step before your eyes the principle of St. Aloysius: "What does this profit me for eternity?" Seek what is above, and the valleys of your heart will be filled.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord! Every mountain and hill shall be brought low."

What mountains and hills are these which obstruct the way of the Lord to our hearts, that He can not approach us, and His graces remain without effect? I answer: They are the mountains and hills of *pride*, obstinacy, conceit, and selfishness. These are all the offshoots of self-love, which is the cause of man's not loving God above every thing, and his neighbor as himself,—the cause why he lives not to worship God, but to love himself above every thing, and his neighbor not for the sake of God, but for his own sake, and to wish really for nothing but the gratification of his own desires.

I ask you, is not this the case with a large majority of those who call themselves children of Holy Church? There is a want of thorough humility; self-love disturbs and prevents within us the work of God, our sanctification. God gives grace to the humble. Examine yourself. What does your own conscience say? Oh, how selfish you still are, and who knows if the good you do is not corroded by self-satisfaction, and has no worth before God? How different would it be if we were humble of heart! We would feel and experience how willingly the Lord approaches us. With what eagerness would we receive into our hearts His

graces, and lean on them whilst treading in the footsteps of our Master.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord! The crooked shall be made straight." What are these bends which obstruct the path of the Lord to our hearts? I answer: Our *insincerity*. We are not in earnest about living as our vocation as children of God and children of the Church demands. We are not serious enough in our endeavors to live as followers of the saints and of Christ.

"Behold," said Christ of Nathanael, "behold a true Israelite in whom there is no guile." Oh, that we were thus disposed! That we all had true simplicity of heart before God, so that Christ in looking at us could say: Behold a true child of my Church, in whom there is no guile, who is really in earnest to receive my graces into his heart and profit by them! In truth, we promise frequently in our prayers and in the confessional to follow in Christ's footsteps, but in reality we utter falsehoods before God. There is in us still too much insincerity to God and man. Examine yourself, and see how it is with you in this regard.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord! The rough ways shall be made plain." What obstacle in the path of the Lord is here indicated? It is our want of *mortification*, our want of a true love of the cross, our want of *patience* in the tribulations of every-day life, especially in our intercourse with our neighbor; the want of readiness to forgive all offenses, to become all to all, and even to love our enemies.

Oh, how few of us esteem the Cross highly enough! How many look upon the miseries of life with disgust, bear them with impatience and repining,—and yet no other road leads to heaven but the one Christ walked on before us,—the way of trials and suffering. How few receive the Cross,—not from man, but from God,—and, uniting it to the Cross of Christ, carry it for love of Him!

What shall I say of our sensitiveness, our aversion and enmity towards our neighbor? How many inspirations of divine grace are lost because we do not possess that kindness of heart which prompts us to excuse and bear patiently the faults and weaknesses of others! How imperfect are the lives of most men, even of the children of the Church in this regard! Have not Christian nations, through all the centuries since Christ appeared upon earth, made war against one another? How rarely do we find Christians who are perfectly free from all trace of what is called aversion, anger and enmity. Examine yourself! Oh, how sensitive you are, and how little you understand true meekness and patience!

St. John, pray for us that, according to thy admonition and example, we may, through humility, sincerity and meekness, open a way for the Lord to our heart!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"The same is He that shall come after me."—John 1.

ADVENT is a season of expectation, in remembrance of the days when mankind longed for the coming of Christ.

This longing the Church expresses especially by the seven antiphons which she uses in the fourth and last week of Advent as sighs to God in the name of her children.

It is important that we should join with her in the spirit of her longing for Christ. This desire is at the same time an assurance of the graces which the commemoration of the birth of Christ will bring at the approaching feast of the Nativity.

The consideration of these antiphons will teach us in what we are deficient, if we do not join in the longing of the Church, and what is wrong if we have no share in the graces that are attached to the commemoration of our Lord's nativity. This will be the subject of to-day's sermon.

O Mary, fill our hearts with that longing for Christ the Redeemer which filled thy soul, that we may be partakers in the promises of Christ!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first antiphon at Vespers in the last week of Advent is as follows:

"O wisdom, who going forth from the mouth of the Most High reachest from end to end, ordering all things with might and mildness, come and teach us the path of thy prudence!"

The first antiphon admonishes us that there is, so to say, but one thing which ought to concern us, but one thing on which eternity depends—namely our salvation. Christ alone has shown us the way of everlasting life, and has trodden the path before us. We are children of His Church; we must follow Him, but prudently.

Prudence suggests the most efficacious means of attaining an end, and uses them to most advantage. How much in this respect is wanting, when there is question of salvation? We read of ten virgins, and five of them were foolish, as Christ assures us; they had no oil in their lamps. The Christian takes no pains to discover and to fulfill the will of God; how imprudent! How pregnant with blessings this festival of the Nativity would be if we possessed the prudence of the children of God!

The second antiphon which the Church uses is as follows:

"O Adonai, guide of thy people, who didst appear to Moses in the burning bush and gavest him the law on Sinai, come and save us with thy outstretched arm!"

This antiphon points to Him who taught us the path of salvation, whom we must follow and, therefore, obey.

If, though we call ourselves Christians, we feel not thus disposed, what is the reason? It is because we do not *know Christ;* because we are too weak and cowardly to follow the example of our Master in the path of virtue. For this we stand in need of grace, and the more miserable we are, the stronger grace we need. Hence the cry of the Church: "Save us with outstretched arms!"

How replete with graces would be the approaching feast of the Nativity, if it increased our knowledge of Christ and our love of Him, so that we might henceforth walk in the humble imitation of the divine Child!

"O, root of Jesse, who standest as a sign to the nations; to whom kings will turn their countenances with awe, and to whom the people will pray: Come to save us, and do not delay!"

This third antiphon tells us of the importance of following Christ with determination, that the esteem and love of holy Church, to which Christ has called us without any merit of our own, may continually grow in us.

We too frequently betray a want of *Catholic consciousness*, that is, of an earnest desire to be worthy of our high vocation as children of the true Church; we show not that, in the deepest depths of our heart, we value the happiness of this our vocation above life and earthly goods, that we are ready, by our conduct, to bear witness before all nations to our faith to make them sharers of our privilege.

Oh, how glorious will be for us the feast of the Na-

tivity if that Catholic consciousness, that gratefulness for our calling, penetrate our hearts!

"O key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel, thou that openest and no one closes, that closest and no one opens, come and lead him that is fettered out of the house of his prison, where he sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death!"

The Church, in this fourth antiphon, warns us that it is possible, even for one of her children, to fall from a state of grace into mortal sin.

What an incitement for such a fallen child of the Church to cry to Christ for help, and to use the means which He has given His Church for the *atonement* of sin! Even if we have not committed a mortal sin, how just the prayer: Lord Jesus, cleanse me more and more from all sin!

Oh, happy feast of the Nativity, glorious night for him who at this holy season approaches the Sacrament of Penance to be cleansed from all sin, and, receiving the Child Jesus into his heart, never again offends God by a deliberate sin.

"O splendor of eternal light, and Sun of justice, come and enlighten those who are sitting in the darkness and in the shadow of death!"

In this fifth antiphon the Church points to the second part of Christian justice, which demands that we be not satisfied with merely avoiding all sin, but that we also strive to walk in the full light of the Sun, which is Christ, and that, living a holy life, we endeavor to become more and more like Him.

Blessed will be the feast of the Nativity for us, if this time of grace awakens our thirst after sanctity, and if our future life will show, that it is at length our earnest desire to live as children of the true Church.

"O King of nations, and their desire, thou the corner-stone that joinest what was parted, come and save man whom thou hast formed from the clay of the earth!"

Thus says the sixth antiphon. It was sin that separated man from God, and divided the human race itself; it was sin which severed the ties of supernatural love between God and man, so that we were no longer His children, or lived together in brotherly love. Christ came to restore primitive peace.

Peace to man! Such was the greeting of the angels in the song which they entoned on the night of the Nativity.

Christians! if the festival of the Nativity is to bring you blessings and powerful graces, then reconcile yourselves to God in the Sacrament of Penance, and from the depth of your heart pardon all your enemies!

O holy feast of the Nativity, how great would be the assurance of the blessings thou bringest, were the children of the Church to strive after peace and harmony. May they do so!

Let us conclude with the last antiphon: "Emmanuel, thou our King and Lawgiver, the Hope of nations, and their Redeemer; save us, Thou our Lord and God!"

The meaning of the word "Emmanuel" is: "God is with us." The Church uses it as an admonition:

Come and take the Lord into your hearts in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Yes, in this manner every child of the Church should celebrate each festival, especially that of the Nativity. I hope that you will all do so.

These are the seven antiphons of the Church in the last week of Advent. They are like seven cords strung over the harp of our hearts, that our longing for Christ and our promises to Him may rise harmoniously upward to heaven. The soul that is thus prepared will realize the words of to-day's gospel, she "will see the salvation of God!" Amen!

SUNDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY.

FIRST SERMON.

"And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city, Nazareth."—Luke 2.

JESUS, Mary and Joseph appear in the temple in order to present the divine Child to the Lord, according to the dictates of the law.

The Holy Family in the temple are an example for every Christian family whose members are anxious to labor for their mutual sanctification. Not only, however, there, but also in their flight into Egypt, and after their return to their home at Nazareth, the holy Family is to all others an example and model of union, which holy and sanctifying in itself, brings blessings for time and eternity.

As on the state of the families depends the spiritual and temporal welfare of the entire congregation, I shall point out to you, in a few words, the characteristic traits of the Holy Family. To-day, especially, give me your undivided attention.

O Mary, pray that all families, especially in this congregation, may so live that men can say of each: Behold a holy family!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first trait we perceive in the Holy Family is their *mutual holy love*.

Behold how great a love was that of Jesus for Mary, whom He, as Son of God, had chosen from all eternity to call His mother! And how great was also the love of Jesus for Joseph, who was to Him, as man, the representative of His heavenly Father!

On the other hand, who can conceive the ardent love of Mary for Jesus! Never had a mother thus felt for her child. He was so entirely her child. Again, how deep was the love of Joseph for Jesus, and how happily Mary and Joseph lived together in virginal purity!

Blessed the family where this bond of mutual love exists between husband and wife, children and parents! There dwell contentment and happiness!

On the other hand, how unhappy the family where, soon after the honey-moon, indifference creeps in, and, not long after, mutual aversion imbitters life!

The second trait, which we observe in the Holy Family, is their mutual *esteem*. This trait is inseparable from the first. A love not founded on esteem soon loses its hold on the heart.

Who can tell how much Jesus esteemed His blessed Mother and St. Joseph! He knew the sublimity of their virtues, which He, as God, had implanted in their

hearts. On the other hand, how great was the mutual esteem of Mary and Joseph, who daily saw each other's good example, and together worshipped in the divine Child their God and their Redeemer!

Happy the family in which the members are animated by this esteem. Love is deeply rooted where the wife can say: "Were I only like my husband, so pious and virtuous! How I admire him!" Or, where the husband is forced to say to himself: "If I were only like my wife; she is truly a saint, if there be saints on earth!" Again, happy the family where the children need no other incitement to honor their parents than their bright example of a virtuous life; where parents have cause to think: "Oh! had I been in my youth as good and pious as my child!" Content and happiness reign in that family.

But woe, when the wife must say: "My husband is a bad man, a bad Christian. I despise him!" Or when the husband has similar thoughts about his wife; still more wretched, I should think, is the family where the children are forced to admit that their father is a bad man, and their mother no honor to them; where parents have the grief to see their children walk the road to perdition. There can be no contentment, no happiness in that household.

The third characteristic of the Holy Family is their *concern* and *care* for one another. How filled with anxious thoughts for the divine Child were the hearts of Mary and Joseph! To serve Jesus and Mary was Joseph's greatest care, day and night; while Jesus

took upon Himself manual labors, to assist His foster-father. What an example to us!

Happy the family where father, mother and children are mutually concerned for each other's temporal and spiritual welfare; in such a home reigns sweet peace and joy. On the other hand, how painful and disheartening it is, when the head of the family does not care for his wife and children; when he does not endeavor to earn a decent livelihood, or spends his money in drinking and dissipation; when the mother does not attend to her household duties, and thinks only of dress and display! Does it never happen that the husband, not caring for his wife, leaves her in want; that the wife, indifferent towards her husband, neglects his comfort, and makes home any thing but cheerful; that children let their parents suffer for the necessaries of life? In such a household can there be happiness?

The fourth trait of the Holy Family, which we should imitate, is their desire to be a *comfort* to one another. If Christ said to St. Gertrude: "When men persecute me, I retire into thy heart; there I find peace," can we doubt that He received comfort from the care and devotion of Mary, with whom He lived for thirty years under the same roof, the object of her most watchful attention? And how great must have been the comfort Mary and Joseph felt in being near Jesus! Nothing in this world could have induced them to part with this happiness.

Happy the family where the husband can say: "I

have a hard life, but my wife is my comfort;" and where the wife can say: "In all trials and tribulations my husband is my comfort, and we have good children."

But if the man sighs: "My greatest cross is my wife," or when the wife has reason to complain: "My husband embitters my life," or when the children cause their parents' hearts to ache, or when the members of the family prefer to be anywhere but at home, peace is banished from the house. In such a family there is no happiness; such a life may be called a hell on earth, and the threats of Christ seem already fulfilled in them here below: "Bind them together into bundles."

The fifth trait with which the Holy Family shines as a model, is their *union* in the peace of mutual love. How could this have been otherwise in a family where there could not be found an imperfection or sin?

Happy the family of which the members bear with each other in holy patience!

But again, in the family where every morning commences with fresh contentions, and where, instead of prayers to call down a blessing, curses and imprecations fill the house, there, if anywhere on earth, must be a foretaste of hell's bitterness.

The sixth trait in the life of the Holy Family, which we ought to imitate, is their mutual edification and encouragement in the service of God. How sanctifying must have been the joint prayers of Jesus, Mary

and Joseph! What an example to one another of piety and devotion!

Happy the family where common prayers and spiritual reading is practised; where regularity in the reception of the Sacraments and in attendance at divine service, is a constant source of mutual edification!

But unhappy the family circle where no example kindles the fire of devotion in the hearts of the children; where, on the contrary, every influence at home withdraws them from religious practises and piety, as is but too often the case in these evil days.

Finally, the seventh and the eighth characteristics, —Joseph dies in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Mary stands by the cross of her dying Son. Jesus takes Mary and Joseph, body and soul, into heaven.

The care of the members of a family for their mutual welfare extends beyond the grave. How sad, when, after death, one of the family is soon forgotten and not aided by prayers and good works!

These are the eight traits of the Holy Family, and they are the eight blessings I wish to every Catholic family, especially in this congregation, as the fruit of the holy Nativity!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And they were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him."—Luke 2.

THE Gospel of to-day testifies that Simeon and Anna spoke prophetically of the Child Jesus as the promised Messiah and Saviour, and they recounted what had been said of Him. The Gospel does not relate all Mary and Joseph heard, and that excited their wonder. Still, one prediction of holy Simeon is clearly recorded, and that is sufficient to create as much astonishment in us as it did in Mary and Joseph. His words are: "This Child is set for the fall, ... and for a sign which shall be contradicted."

Let us consider to-day how Simeon's prophecy has been fulfilled, with sorrowful accuracy, in Christ and His Church.

O Mary, pray for us, that the Child Jesus may become a sign for our resurrection and salvation, and not, through our fault, for our fall!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

God, in His mercy, wished to save the fallen human race, and to send them a Redeemer in His only-begotten Son. But He also decreed that man should

appropriate the graces of Redemption by the exercise of his free will. Unhappily, the number of those who do this remains small. The entire life of Jesus and His Church verifies only too clearly the prophecy of Simeon: A sign which shall be contradicted. Hardly was the divine Child born, when it was sought after to be put to death, and driven to Egypt for a place of safety. And no sooner had Christ shown Himself to the people, than on all sides contradictions arose against Him. Although personally most amiable, a most perfect model of holiness, and promulgating the purest doctrines of love for God and man, He was persecuted, and surrounded by enemies. And who were His enemies? Just those of whom it was the least to be expected, the priests and scribes, who might easily have convinced themselves that in Him the prophecies were fulfilled. Notwithstanding the numerous miracles He wrought, and which they could not deny, they cried, in their blind rage: "Crucify Him; His blood be upon us, and upon our children" (Matt. 27, 23, 25). Even now, after eighteen hundred years, the Jews deny Him, although they have in their hands the prophecies concerning the Messiah, which were all fulfilled in Him. The heathen world opposed Him; and, with incredible blindness, does so still. The Apostles, persecuted in Jerusalem, wandered over the entire earth, preaching the Gospel, and confirming their words by numberless miracles. Following in the footsteps of the Apostles, for the next eighteen hundred years, came countless pro-

claimers of the Divine Word—messengers of the faith—and, among them, many great saints, gifted with miraculous powers. And still, to this hour, half the human race is buried in the darkness of idolatry.

Compare the wisdom of the Gospel with the absurdity of heathen fables, and yet the darkness of paganism is not dispelled. With what cruelty has paganism, from the time of Nero to the present day, made war against the kingdom of Christ! Yet the Church still exists—a sign, as Gamaliel said, that the arm of the Lord protects her. But her adversaries do not recognize miracles. It is astounding!

Even among those who believe in Christ, what contradictions! Let us only think of the one hundred and twenty millions of heretics who are separated from the Church! They all believe the words of Christ in regard to His Church: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her," and, further: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. 28, 20), and: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican" (Matt. 18, 17). And yet so many remain in their misbelief, and contradict the teachings of Christ's Church. What inconsistency! What blindness! It is astounding!

Lastly.—Even in the life of those who, as children of the Church, believe what she teaches, a great deal of inconsistency is frequently manifested. This becomes strikingly evident to us when we think of the eight beatitudes or promises, in which the Lord en-

courages the practice of virtue, if we are determined to follow His holy example in the path of sanctity.

"Blessed are the poor," says Christ. Child of the Church, you believe it, and confess it with your mouth; but how your life belies your words! Is it not your only aim to accumulate riches? Is there, in this respect, any difference between you and a heathen? On the contrary, you, perhaps, show greater anxiety to prosper in business than those who have not, like you, the happiness to be enlightened by holy faith. You feel no desire after the kingdom of heaven, which is promised to the poor in spirit. You are only a business man, care only for money, and say in your heart: Blessed are the rich! What a contrast you present to Jesus, poor, when He might be rich.

"Blessed are the meek," is the maxim of Christ. Child of the Church, you believe it and confess it with your mouth; but how your life belies your words! Early even in the morning, your temper overpowers you; your uncontrollable impatience offends and hurts your companions, and your ill-humor lasts, perhaps, all day. Your mind is, not only for one day, but year after year, like a storm-tossed sea. What a contrast to the meekness of Jesus!

"Blessed are they that mourn," says the Lord. Child of the Church, you believe it and confess it with your lips; but how your life belies your words! Are you not consumed with craving after the pleasures of the world and the gratification of your senses, while there is not a trace in you of compunction and

self-abnegation. What a contrast to the suffering, sad, crucified Jesus!

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice," says Jesus. Child of the Church, you believe and confess it; but how your life contradicts it! Are you not content in your lukewarmness? Have you ever earnestly thought of sanctifying your life? What a contrast to Jesus, most holy!

"Blessed are the clean of heart," says Christ. Child of the Church, you believe it, and your lips proclaim it; but how your life belies your words! Oh, how full your heart is of unclean desires; and, perhaps, it is more soiled by lust than the hearts of thousands of heathens. What a contrast to Jesus, most pure!

"Blessed are the merciful," is the teaching of the Saviour. Child of the Church, you believe it; but how your conduct contradicts your belief! How avaricious, how heartless you are, how slow in performing acts of corporal and spiritual mercy! What a contrast to the most merciful Jesus!

"Blessed are the peacemakers;" and yet how much inclined you are to contention, how unforgiving is your heart! What a contrast to Jesus, the Mediator between God and man!

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake." How emphatically Christ says: "Let him who will follow me take up his cross. . . . . If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." He Himself ended His life on the cross, and how little love you bear it! How little have you

suffered for God and His Church in your zeal for saving souls! This contradiction of the children of the Church is more incomprehensible than that of the Jews, heathens or heretics.

Oh, that this contradiction would end, and we could, with the sincerity of St. Paul, ask the Lord: "What wilt thou have me to do!" Then will Christ become a sign to us, to arise from the indifferent, the sinful life of nominal Christians, to the life of the true children of God in the imitation of Christ! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."—Luke 2.

TO-DAY'S Gospel points to a number of persons, each one of whom, taken separately, represents an influential class in society. We see a married couple, Mary and Joseph; the Child Jesus; Simeon, the venerable old priest; Anna, the holy widow, and people collected together. One of these, especially after the Child Jesus, attracts our attention, and that is Mary, His Mother. To her Simeon addressed himself, prophesying that a sword would pierce her soul. It is, therefore, principally to mothers that I address myself to-day.

Although I am no prophet, yet I am priest, and looking back upon the experiences of my clerical life, I have a right to prophesy and say to every mother:

Fulfill your duties to your children as a Christian and a Catholic mother, lest a sword of sorrow pierce your heart!

What I have to say on this subject is, in a manner, also addressed to fathers; and every one, according to his state, will be able to make applications to himself, with a view that Christ may be set for his resurrection and not for his fall.

O Mary, pray that all parents may comprehend my words to-day, and that they may draw profit from them for the salvation of their children!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Simeon prophesied to Mary that a sword should pierce her soul. This sword Mary had not deserved, while you, faithless mothers, have deserved the sword with which your children pierce your hearts. This becomes clear to us when we follow the course of a child's education.

The first care of a mother in regard to the child which God gives her, must be, that it is *safely born*, and baptized as early as possible. How important a warning, especially for mothers in our days!

There are mothers who, in order to escape the discomforts and dangers of their state, intentionally use means which make them become real child-murderers. But even if this is not the case, mothers are often not careful enough, and it is their fault if the child is not born alive, or if it remains a long time unbaptized in the power of the devil. If a child dies without baptism, and loses heaven through the mother's fault, woe is her! Reproach will pierce her soul like a two-edged sword, and will remain in it forever. No priest, no pope, can ever draw it out. How I pity her! She may repent of the deed, but she can not undo it.

As children grow up, they should be taught as early as possible to raise their thoughts to God, and to say by heart the prayers which the Church prescribes. Children like this exercise better, and have more capacity for it, than one would suppose. Even the small-

est child can learn from a pious mother some short prayers, and repeat them morning and night. If this is not done, then, mother, your children will learn to curse before they learn to pray; and a sword will pierce your heart.

Afterwards it becomes a mother's duty to instruct her children in the catechism. Oh, how fearfully neglected is this obligation by many! In this regard we may lay down the following rule:

Every mother should instruct her child in such a manner, that in its tenth year it will be prepared to receive holy Communion. *Instruction! instruction!* is needed in these days, in order that every one may give an account of his faith.

And we can impart it so easily, now that we have such excellent opportunities of instructing ourselves by reading good books. Once a grandmother brought me a little girl of three years and a half, who knew the whole of the small catechism by heart. Surprised I asked the old lady how it was possible that so small a child could be so thoroughly instructed. She answered: "This is my daughter's child, and as she is with me the whole day, I teach her to answer all my questions correctly."

Tell me, mothers, why do some children ten and twelve years old, know less than this child of three? Your negligence, your ignorance is the cause.

When a child is old enough to receive holy *Communion*, and to go out into the world, then it is a parent's duty to see that it does not frequent *evil company*, or go

into the service of godless people. Parents must also assist their children to find that vocation for which, as far as we can judge, God destines them. And further, they must take care that their daughters do not marry irreligious, unbelieving men or bad Christians.

Frivolous mother! who is more to blame than you that your daughter so soon neglects her religious duties? Your own hand prepared the sword which pierces your heart.

Parents must especially observe if their sons have any inclination or talent for the important office of the priesthood; and further, if their boys or girls have any vocation to enter Religious Orders.

But, above all, parents must, by their own conduct, give the children the very best example.

The truly Catholic mother is easily recognized. She is given to prayer, insists on having morning and evening devotions in common; she hears Mass as often as her duties permit, goes to holy Communion regularly and often.

But if a mother is the contrary of all this—prays seldom, rarely goes to Mass, frequents the Sacraments at long intervals—then the children are still less disposed to piety and more irregular in their religious duties. And is it surprising that such a mother, if she lives long enough to see her children grow up, experiences from them griefs and disappointments? Sharp, sharp indeed the sword whose point will pierce her heart!

But in educating a child one must also watch and chide and punish. No more powerful motive can be

urged upon parents for the judicious discharge of this duty than that contained in the words of the venerable Simeon: "This child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many."

There is not a man who exerts no influence on others, whether for good or for evil. Parents, remember that the good or bad education of your children will work effects even to the day of judgment!

Happy will you be, parents, if, on the last day, not only your children will thank you for having educated them as true Catholics, but also numberless others, who, through you and your children, have become virtuous and thus saved their souls. Happy will you be, when these will call out to you: Had you not brought up your son so piously, he would not have become the priest who led my soul in the way to heaven. Had you, good parents, not been so careful in the education of your daughter, she would never have become the pious wife and mother who saved her husband and her children.

But woe to you parents, if, through neglect of your children's education, not they alone are lost, but others are dragged down with them into perdition. Woe to you, if on the last day these lost souls cry to you: Had you not neglected the education of your children, we should not have been led astray and plunged into everlasting misery!

Your repentance will then come too late. From the mouth of the divine Judge will then be heard these words to the angels, His reapers: Bind them together,

the bad parents and worse children, and cast them into everlasting fire, that there they may forever curse each other!

Mothers, may to-day's admonition ward off from your souls the sword of sorrow. May your death-bed be surrounded by pious children, reared up to virtue by your good example and careful instruction, and thanking you with grateful tears for the pains you have taken in their education. That scene will bring consolation to your heart, and you will with holy Simeon exclaim: Now, O Lord, dismiss thy servant in peace, for my eyes have seen the salvation of all my children. I can close my eyes with the firm hope, that soon in heaven we can all embrace as children of one common parent, God, the Father of mankind.

Simeon blessed Mary and Joseph, and so will I, as priest, bless those who have made the resolution to fulfill with renewed zeal their duties towards their children. The blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, bè, and remain with you, faithful parents, and with your children, all the days of your lives! Amen!

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

"And they sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance."—Luke 2.

THE Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem as to-day's Gospel tells us, without the knowledge of His Mother or foster-father. Who can conceive the anxiety which filled the hearts of Mary and Joseph, when they discovered that Jesus was not with them, and when for three days they searched for Him in vain! They felt their loss in all its magnitude, and in their humility feared that Jesus might have left them for ever. But as this misfortune had not befallen them through their own fault, their conscience was at peace.

How different, however, is it with those who are so unhappy as to lose Jesus through sin. Yet how great ought to be the anxiety of the sinner, and how eager his search after Jesus!

The reason why this is not the case, and why the sinner so frequently postpones his conversion, is because he does not reflect on the greatness of his loss in being deprived of Jesus.

Let us consider this to-day.

O Mary, by that sorrow which filled thy heart during the three days that Jesus was lost to thee, pray for us, that we may obtain the grace of a sincere and true conversion!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

What fear befalls those who suddenly perceive that they have lost an object of great value! Suppose a man goes to a foreign land and takes with him a check for a considerable sum of money. He arrives at his destination, and behold, his check is gone, he has lost it! Or a man has in his possession a will, which entitles him to inherit a large fortune, that will secure him all his life from want; he loses it! How great his fear, and how indefatigable his search for it! A medicine, an infallible remedy, is prescribed for a sick man; he loses the recipe, and can not replace it!

But what is all this in comparison with the loss of Jesus by mortal sin! We will be able to judge, if we consider who Jesus is, and what He is to us.

Jesus in Himself is God; *true* God of true God, the infinitely perfect Being! To lose Jesus means to lose God. How inexpressibly great this loss!

Jesus is *God and man* at the same time. He is our Saviour. He is, as man, the most gifted being which God ever called into existence. Hence, what a loss to lose Jesus! He is the King of glory, the King of the heavenly hosts, whom the Father has crowned, and

to whom He has given a name, at whose mention "every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell!" (Philipp. 2, 10). We are destined to be, one day, the sharers of His glory. What a loss, therefore, the loss of Jesus!

Our pain at the loss of Jesus increases when we meditate on what Jesus has become to us as our Redeemer. It is He who has opened the gates of heaven for us and regained for us the right to become children of God and heirs to heaven. Through our fall into sin all the fruits of the redemption are lost to us, and, at the same time, many graces and promises for time and eternity.

To lose Jesus through mortal sin, is to lose that priceless gift, *sanctifying grace*, by which we had become children of God, and which had given us the right to call Him Father. A single grace is of more value than all earthly crowns; and yet many graces are forfeited through one mortal sin! What a loss!

Not only this; but to lose Jesus through sin, means to lose all those *merits* which we may have gained by our former life in the service of God. It means further, to lose all opportunity of gaining any thing for heaven as long as we remain in the state of mortal sin. United to Jesus by our intention of doing all for God, each act becomes of indescribable value; and besides life is so short, so uncertain, and, once gone, it never returns.

Moreover, in losing Jesus, we lose all *consolation* in suffering. This, certainly, is a great misfortune in this

vale of tears, where every one has to bear his share of grief and pain. In the state of grace, sufferings, united with those of Christ, secure us more glory than many other good works together. What a consolation! Yet, that is lost to the sinner! He drags wearily along the cross of the thief who died at the Saviour's left side.

By losing Jesus through sin we lose the power of making our actions *meritorious for heaven.* In the state of sin we can do nothing that deserves an eternal reward.

How sensitive are men to temporal losses! How deeply they feel it, when they are deprived of their office, or an opportunity to increase their worldly possessions! What would be the feeling of a man possessed of a gold mine, which he supposes will for many years continue to enrich him, if the vein of gold would suddenly give out, and the mine produce nothing but sand? Besides this, the sinner at the same time closes to himself the sources through which grace pours into our hearts, acceptable prayer, the worthy reception of the Sacraments, and a share in the merits of the saints.

In losing Jesus, we lose the *friendship of God*, and become loathsome objects to Him. From children of God we become children of the devil! Oh, how dreadful!

In losing Jesus, we lose the friendship of the *saints;* we separate from them and unite ourselves to the evil spirits, who hate us and laugh at our destruction; for, our despair will be greater than theirs through

all eternity, as the Son of God redeemed us and not them!

Losing Jesus, is losing for all *eternity* a heaven of joy and a share in the glory of Jesus, who, in the Apocalypse of St. John, says: "To him that shall overcome, I will grant to sit with me in my throne" (Apoc. 3, 21). He will also speak that terrible sentence to them who have lost their God: "Depart from me into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25, 41).

Hence, when we have the misfortune to lose Jesus through sin, how anxious should we be to find Him again. And, to effect this, we must return to Jerusalem and hasten to the temple. Jerusalem signifies City of Peace. We must reconcile ourselves to God through those means which He has left in His Church for sinners; namely, through the worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance!

The consolation which the soul experiences when it is reconciled to God, and receives Jesus worthily in the most holy Sacrament, is a drop of that consolation which refreshed the hearts of Mary and Joseph when they returned to Nazareth with Jesus, never again to lose Him.

May God give to all here present who have been living in the state of sin, the grace to return without delay to the path of Christian righteousness, that they may grow with the Child Jesus in years, wisdom and grace before God and man, and never again lose Jesus!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And they sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance."—Luke 2.

THOSE who comprehend the sad consequences for time and eternity of the loss of Jesus will endeavor to seek Him. Truly, if it is the greatest misfortune to lose Jesus, it is also the greatest duty to seek Him and to endeavor by a sincere reconciliation with God to find Him. But how many, knowing the greatness of the loss, lose Jesus, and yet wait months and years without seeking Him by a true conversion!

But those even who seem to seek Jesus do not find Him. And why? This we will consider to-day.

O Mary, pray for us, that, following thy example, we may seek Jesus diligently, and that, having found Him, we may never again lose Him!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first condition for seeking Jesus effectually, is to feel thoroughly the loss of Him. While Mary and Joseph knew not that Jesus was away from them, they did not seek Him. I apply this, and ask: What is the cause that so many continue to live in sin and do not think of a true reformation? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," prayed Christ. Sinners know not what treasure they have lost by sin,

hence they are not anxious to find Jesus. They do not estimate their loss sufficiently, for we seek eagerly only that which we value.

The events of every-day life furnish many illustrations. A man possesses an important document, a jewel, a check for a large sum of money, and, perhaps, does not think of its worth so long as it remains in his possession; but as soon as it is lost, his mind is filled with consternation.

One day, as I was riding on a train, it happened that, when the conductor entered our car, one of my fellow-passengers perceived that he had lost his ticket. Until then, he had been sitting very quietly; but now he searched in his pockets, looked under the seats, asked the passengers, one after another, to rise, in order to see if the ticket was not lying on the floor; he left nothing undone to find it. I thought to myself: Good man, if you took such pains to find your soul, which you, perhaps, have lost through irreligion or sin, you would surely find it.

But how great an indifference exists, in this regard, among sinners! The union with Jesus in the state of grace, is our passport to heaven. We lose it, and we do not seek it!

Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem. If we have lost Jesus through sin, and desire to find Him again, then we must turn from the way which separates us from Christ. We must earnestly examine our conscience, and not carelessly, as is generally done, but in such a manner that we may come to the knowledge

of our sins, despise and resolve to avoid them. But this is not sufficient; we must also avoid every occasion that leads to sin and all that retards and opposes our conversion.

Mary and Joseph sought Jesus among their *friends* and *relatives*. This means that we must investigate our thoughts, desires, words, actions and omissions, in order not only to learn where and how we have sinned, but especially to see what danger there is for us in our intercourse with others. If in doing this we proceed with true earnestness, we can not fail to regain the favor of the Lord. A striking example of this was an event which recently took place.

Think of what was done when the first cable laid in the ocean broke. They resolved to search for it on the bottom of the sea. Wonderful to say, the attempt succeeded! In a few days the cry: "Found!" was heard on board the ship, and they drew the cable out of the water.

I thought at the time: How easy would it be for man, were he earnest, to recover the lost grace of God, to find his soul, even had it been drowned in an ocean of sin.

Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the *temple* at Jerusalem. If we are to find Jesus, we must obey the admonition of Christ: "Show thyself to the priest." We must reveal ourselves to him as we are, and answer all his questions truthfully, in order that our reconciliation to God may be real, thorough and lasting.

God grant that every one here present, who feels

that he has lost Jesus through sin, may find Him again by true repentance, an entire change of heart and mind, and a sincere reconciliation with God in the holy Sacrament of Penance.

To seek Jesus does not mean, however, only to avoid mortal sin, or to free ourselves from it and become reconciled to God; it means, also, to strive, in the state of grace, after greater perfection, to become more and more like Jesus by a closer imitation of Him.

The search after Jesus in the path of perfection ought to be conducted in the following manner:

We must try to know ourselves daily better, so that we are able to discern which faults and imperfections hinder the flow of grace into our hearts, or even place our souls in danger of falling into more serious sins. Therefore, he who seeks Jesus must follow the advice of St. Ignatius, and daily make the *particular examination* of conscience; that is, devote special attention to one or other defect. It is known how decidedly St. Ignatius expressed himself on this subject: "If you will promise me to make the particular examen of conscience every day, I will promise you that you will become a saint." Thus spoke a saint who had himself experienced the advantages of this method.

Most of you know in what the *particular examination* consists. As, however, some may be present who have never heard of it, I will explain this exercise in a few words:

Every Christian is supposed in the evening to say some prayers, and to examine his conscience on all that he has done during the day. A zealous Christian should, besides this, examine himself once during the day—say at noon or at night—on some particular sin to which he is inclined, and which he is determined to fight against and exterminate. He counts up how often he has failed in the course of the day from this particular evil inclination or bad habit; he then notes down the number, and imposes on himself some penance that corresponds to the number and grievousness of his defections.

The particular examen should be directed chiefly against that sinful inclination or passion whis is called the predominant passion, that one, namely, from which our other defects, for the most part, spring and derive their strength, just as the branches and fruit of a tree derive their nourishment from the root. To prevent the growing of branches and fruit, we must cut the trunk and tear up the roots. There can be no fruit where the channels of sap are destroyed.

It is worthy of notice how one defect is the source of many others. Hardly a nature but has some such deeply-rooted passion; and as long as this is not brought under control, there can be no decisive move towards perfection.

One is proud, another avaricious, a third prone to anger, envious, intemperate, or tormented by the spirit of lust, or he is indifferent and indolent from habit and without any desire to strive after sanctity.

A daily examination assists us to discover and subdue this chief passion and helps us to plant and nourish in our own hearts the opposite virtues, and to make them grow, become strong, and bear fruit.

That we may succeed in so advantageous an endeavor, we must seek Jesus by thinking of Him frequently during the day, and keep before our minds His life, sufferings and death. To seek Jesus in the way of perfection, means to have zealous recourse to the sources of grace that God has laid open for us in His Church. It means, especially, to practise prayer with the aim to attain the spirit of constant recollection and union with God. If we succeed in this attempt, we shall find God in our hearts.

As regards the presence of Christ in the most Blessed Sacrament, I will say: Let us hasten to the tabernacle, for there He dwells personally. Happy the soul who, desiring to be with Jesus, profits by His presence in the holy Sacrament of the Altar, by visiting churches, hearing Mass, and frequently receiving holy Communion. Such a soul finds Jesus, and will, during time and eternity, never be separated from Him! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And they found Him in the temple."—Luke 2.

MARY lost Jesus; and who can conceive the anguish which filled her heart when, on her way to Nazareth, she missed the divine Child! I think that the sword which then pierced her heart must have been infinitely more painful to her than the sight of Christ hanging on the cross or lying dead upon her knees. While He suffered, she was with Him; when dead, she held Him in her arms, and the thought that Jesus had left her, on account of her unworthiness, could not enter her mind. But, on the other hand, who can describe her joy, her happiness when, after an anxious search, she found her divine Child!

Last year we considered what means losing and seeking Jesus; let us to-day, following the admonition of the Gospel, meditate on the meaning of "finding" Him.

O Mary, by the joy that filled thy heart when thou didst find Jesus in Jerusalem, we beseech thee to pray for us, that we may have the grace to be partakers in this joy!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

If we ask ourselves, in what the finding of Jesus consists, we must consider two different classes of

souls,—namely, those who live in the state of mortal sin, and those who walk through life in a state of indifference or imperfection.

The former, those who have lived in the state of mortal sin, find Jesus through the grace of a true conversion and the absolution which they receive.

How great a consolation to these souls when the priest, in the name of the Lord, says to them: "Your sins are forgiven!" Ask Magdalen, ask other holy penitents, ask yourself, and you will admit the truth of the well-known words of a preacher: "There is more consolation in the tears of Magdalen, than in the joy of all the children of the world."

The other class of souls are those who, although not entirely separated from Jesus by their *imperfect* life and still belonging to Him, yet can not be said to be with Him, to be near Him.

The soul that is hampered by great imperfections and deliberate venial sins, has not the right to say: "I have found Him whom my soul loveth, and I will not let Him go" (Cant. 3, 4). She only has a right to speak thus who can truly say: Jesus is my *thought;* the remembrance of Him accompanies me wherever I go! A soul living an indifferent and imperfect life forgets Jesus too often.

One who strives after sanctity has the right to say: "I have found Him whom my soul loveth," if he can at the same time say: Jesus is my model, my desire, my example in all that I do. To become daily more like Him in holiness, is my only desire.

Imperfect souls have not their eyes riveted on Jesus, but on the doings of the world. They follow the example of the children of the world, and only strive to progress as far as the things of this life are concerned; they desire to please men and to associate with them.

A soul striving after righteousness can say: "I have found Him whom my soul loveth," provided he thinks only of discovering and accomplishing the holy will of God, and still more, if he fulfills, with ever increasing faithfulness and always purer motives, the duties of his station in life, uniting his intentions to those of the most holy Heart of Jesus.

Imperfect souls who have not found Jesus never more to lose Him, are satisfied with fulfilling the duties of their station without a thought of God, except as far as their own comforts and those of their families require! Such souls are generally deficient in those good intentions which are necessary to make their daily actions meritorious for the life to come. Their life thus resembles more that of the children of the world than that of the children of God; and such souls wonder that others, aiming at perfection, are different children of the Church and different followers of Christ from themselves.

It is related in the life of St. Stanislaus, that his brother, a child of the world, was indefatigable in endeavoring to persuade him to do like himself and partake of the pleasures of the world. But the answer of the saint remained always the same: Brother, I was born for higher things. I was born to enjoy higher

and more ennobling happiness, than the vain, frivolous and short-lived pleasures of the world. Stanislaus could, indeed, say with the Child Jesus: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

Did you not know that "I found Him whom my soul loveth?" You are astonished that I commence the day with His sweet name upon my lips, and without delay ask Him to give me the grace to follow Him during the day in all my actions that I may become more like Him and more pleasing to Him, and unite all my words, thoughts and actions with the aspirations of His holy Heart!

You begin the day full of worldly cares; your first thought is of your daily business, of your temporal losses and gains. But listen: Do you know that I have found Him whom my soul loves, that I live only for Jesus, and that I make use of my life only to be united to Him more closely and more lovingly.

You endeavor to enjoy the society of others, and to procure for yourself all earthly pleasures, and you are astonished that I live otherwise, and, as St. Paul says, trample under foot that which you pursue. Do you not know that I have found Him whom my soul loves, and that I would not exchange for all the pleasures of the world the delight of being united to Him in prayer, that to be with Him is sweeter to me than to be with any human being, whatever his rank or attractions?

You marvel at this, because you have never taken Jesus lovingly to your heart, and can not, therefore,

comprehend the meaning of the words of St. Paul: "Our life is hidden with Christ in God," whereby already here on earth we have a foretaste of the bliss of heaven.

To you, prayer is a wearisome duty—to me, it is the breath of my soul; for, I have found Him whom my soul loveth,—Jesus!

To you, divine service is an unpleasant duty; to me, it is the comfort of life. You are surprised that I am not satisfied with hearing Mass on Sundays and holy-days, but hear it also during the week, and visit Jesus during the day; that I do not receive Him only once a year in Holy Communion, but as often as possible. Do you not know that I have found Him whom my soul loveth? that I know Him personally through His real presence in this holy Sacrament, and that I know Him as the heavenly Manna which contains all sweetness? Do you not know that, united to Him in this holy Sacrament, I am ready to exclaim before heaven and earth: I have found Him whom my soul loveth!—I live, so to say, only for Him in this holy Sacrament. If you marvel at this, listen to what the Church says in her prayer in the Mass of the most holy Sacrament: "Grant, O God, that we may one day rejoice in being forever more united to Thy Divine Majesty, a foretaste of which bliss is the partaking of Thy flesh and blood on earth."

Happy the souls who have learned by experience the truth and meaning of this prayer of the Church! They have the right to say, "I have found Him whom

my soul loveth"—and: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Galat. 2, 20).

It is true that God permits such souls to be, at times, subject to temptations and trials, and no one can doubt that it is hard for imperfect souls to remain faithful to the Lord in the struggle with temptation and under the pressure of affliction. But a soul who has truly found Christ can say: Jesus is my strength in all temptations. His word, His example, His assistance, His name alone, is able to drive from me all evil, as a strong wind scatters the dust. David says: "Through my God I shall go over a wall" (Ps. 17, 30).

How heavy the nominal Christian finds the cross, how he is bent down by the weight of suffering in comparison with him who, having found Christ, bears all trials submissively, receives the cross from His hands and carries it patiently for His sake. Such a Christian can sigh with St. Francis Xavier: "To have no Cross would be to me the greatest Cross!" To have no Cross! Why? I have found Him whom my soul loveth!

The imperfect Christian is terrified at the thought of death. He must part with all the possessions and pleasures of this world, all those near and dear to him to whom his heart has clung in this life more than to God. He has cause to cry: "Thus dost thou separate, bitter death!"

A soul who has found Jesus during life longs for Him and is filled with the desire to be forever united

to Him; she sighs with St. Paul: "To be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1, 23), freed from all danger of losing Him. How great an exultation for the soul when she is allowed to cry out in heaven: I have found Him whom my soul loveth; I hasten to His arms and remain with Him in the bliss of His eternal love!

O Jesus! grant that all of us who have striven here upon earth after sanctity, and have endeavored to follow in Thy footsteps, may with this joyous cry embrace Thee in heaven!—Amen!

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye!"—John 2.

CHRIST, as we read in to-day's Gospel, assisted at the wedding in Cana, and there before the eyes of His disciples wrought His first miracle, as a proof that He was really the promised Messiah, the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. He changed water into wine. Water is the emblem of indifference, wine that of strength and zeal.

I say to you: If we desire to have the right to call ourselves true children of Holy Church, we must abandon our lukewarm life, and must change it into the wine of zeal by earnestly striving after Christian perfection.

Mary instructs us in what we must do, in order that this miracle of grace may be accomplished in us through Jesus Christ. She said to the waiters:

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

Let us apply this admonition to our subject, and no doubt if we act in accordance with it, we will change our indifferent life, and strive with the zeal of saints after the perfection of virtue.

And such a change of mind is also a miracle, a mira-

cle of grace. May Christ, the Bridegroom of our souls, work this miracle in us!

O Mary, thou who hadst compassion on the newly-married pair at Cana, pray for us that we may change from a life of lukewarm piety to one of zealous striving after sanctity!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye!" No doubt, had we listened to all the teachings of Jesus and regulated our conduct by them, we should have lived a life of zeal like Mary and the Apostles. Yes, if we would only take to heart what the Gospel relates of the teaching and works of Jesus, how great would be our zeal! As it is, however, nothing is more general than the state of lukewarmness and imperfection. Is not this the case with you? I hear within me your answer to this question: Yes, father, I too belong to those poor, imperfect souls; my heart is filled with the water of indifference.

In order to produce a change, we must follow the advice of the blessed Mother at Cana: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye!" and oh, how soon will the water of indifference be changed into the wine of zeal!

Let us, in this connection, look at the eight beatitudes by which Christ endeavors to encourage us to lead a life of Christian perfection. Christ says: "Blessed are the poor!" What is the cause why many are

so indifferent? They are too much engrossed with the things of this world; they care too much for money, for temporal possessions. Child of the Church! do as Jesus teaches; tear yourself away from the immoderate cares of this world and endeavor to gain in all your daily actions merit for Heaven. The water of indifference will then be changed into the wine of zeal. Inordinate desires for the goods of this world are the thorns which prevent the seed of the divine Word from unfolding into blossoms and fruit.

"Blessed are the meek!" That which deprives us of the spirit of meditation and of the blessings which prayer gives, that which makes us cold and indifferent, is our impatience. It prevents the infusion of that divine grace which would animate us to be zealous in the service of God. Men sometimes live for years an indifferent life. The cause thereof is their excessive sensitiveness. They are tormented from morning till night by imaginings and uncharitable thoughts. This state of mind prevents them from keeping their resolutions—making use of divine grace; hence their lukewarm life.

Live from to-day in holy patience and in meekness of heart, and the water of indifference will be changed into the wine of fervor.

"Blessed are they that mourn!" That which renders us indolent in the service of God, is the pursuit of temporal enjoyments and the want of sorrow and contrition for every sin and imperfection of which we are guilty. St. Paul assures us that those who belong

to Christ must crucify their flesh and its lusts. In the writings of Solomon the Holy Ghost admonishes us, saying: "Wisdom dwells not in the land of the indolent." Whoever strives above all else to live comfortably and never thinks of self-abnegation or penance, whose only desire is to enjoy life to the utmost, must live a life of indifference. Sensual people do not recognize the danger of such an existence, they do not even see the sin of it, and would feel but little pain or repentance did their conscience reproach them. The characteristic trait of their life is indolence, and hence their indifference, their lukewarmness.

Practice self-abnegation, do external works of penance by withdrawing from dissipating entertainments, and in the endeavor after Christian perfection the water of indifference will soon change into the wine of fervor.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice!" How many are satisfied with not committing mortal sin and seemingly fulfilling the duties of piety. They do not consider the purport of a holy life. Hence their indifference. They are content with the beaten path of every-day life; they are only nominal Christians.

Read daily the lives of the saints with the desire to imitate them according to your condition in life. Consider that the saints were human beings conceived in sin, and surrounded as you are by temptations; that they battled against these, and avoided every occasion of sin. When they had sinned, they approached the

tribunal of penance; strengthened by prayer and the holy Sacraments, they fulfilled to the utmost of their power the duties of their station, and evinced true heroism and constancy in the practice of virtue. Consider all this, and I assure you you will soon feel as St. Augustine felt, and will say to yourselves: If so many others could do it, why should not I? The water of indifference will change into the wine of zeal.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!" The lukewarm Christian wants true brotherly love: he wants fervor in the discharge of deeds of charity, especially, of spiritual works of mercy, where the healing and saving of souls is concerned. Hence the indifference of so many. Do all you can to assist your neighbor, and with St. Francis Xavier cry often to Heaven: "Lord, give me souls!" and the grace of God will increase in your own soul, and the water of indifference will be changed into the wine of fervor.

"Blessed are the clean of heart!" Some people grovel in the dust of this world, and seldom obey the call of the Lord uttered by the priest at the altar: "Raise your hearts to Heaven!" Hence the indifferent life of so many.

Especially cleanse your heart from every stain of sensuality. Do not neglect to do this, and in a short time you will become a new man, a zealous Christian.

"Blessed are the peace-makers!" How few can confess truly before God: I have no enmity to any man! On the contrary, how many there are who live

in a state of continual contention in their home and out of it! Hence their indifference and want of that grace which God bestows on us when for His love we love all mankind, as Christ has taught us.

Act in accordance with this divine teaching and allow no uncharitable thought a place in your heart, then, as Holy Writ assures us, your righteousness will grow until it shines like the light of day.

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake!" Human considerations, the desire to please every one, and the unwillingness to suffer for love of God and the greater glory of Christ, these conditions of the mind are causes of a lukewarm life.

Let us, on the contrary, rejoice with the Apostles that we are deemed worthy to suffer for the sake of justice, for our zeal in extending the kingdom of God. Persecution is very often the means of awaking Christians from the slumber of indifference, as recent events have manifested. Many Catholics have been aroused into consciousness by the oppression of the Church.

If this consciousness is strengthened in your heart, then the water of indifference will be changed into the wine of a true Catholic life, sanctified by the perfect fulfillment of the duties of your station in life! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee."—John 2.

TO-DAY'S Gospel proposes for our meditation a marriage feast at which Jesus was one of the guests. Let us reflect that Jesus is the bridegroom of our souls, and invites us all to His marriage feast. It depends on us to accept this invitation; and who is there that does not desire to be present at the marriage of the Lamb in heaven of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse? We prepare ourselves for this feast by fulfilling here upon earth the will of the Spouse of our souls. It is true, every Christian tries more or less to fulfill his duties, *but the essential point is not, to do something after some manner, but to do every thing that Jesus demands and in the manner that he demands. And on what does this depend?* We shall endeavor to find out.

O Mary! pray for us, that we may be called, in all truth, servants of the Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

To do all that Jesus commands means, first, to avoid *sin and all that leads to it*, and after the example of Christ to fight against temptation. Watch, pray, and

encounter the tempter with a firmly spoken: "Leave me!" Should you have the misfortune to commit sin, then go immediately to confession. But how often do we postpone confession!

To do all that Jesus commands signifies, further, to do all the good He demands of us, namely, to fulfill with all zeal and diligence, the duties of our station through love for God, uniting our intention with the intention of His holy Heart.

To do all that Jesus commands means to practise the virtues of His most holy Heart, according to His words: "Learn of me!" In order to practise these virtues we must seize every opportunity, and endeavor to perfect ourselves in them without relaxation. Therefore, we must above all lay a firm foundation of humility, and see that the three theological virtues inform all our actions. Christian! is this so in your case? Alas, no! You do not do what faith and love for Jesus require of you, but what pride, ambition, vanity, self-love, and egotism demand.

To do all that Jesus commands, means also to keep before our eyes, and exemplify in all our actions, the cardinal virtues, prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude. These virtues have received their name from the Latin word: Cardo, a hinge, on which the door hangs and turns.

No virtue deserves the name which is deficient in either prudence, temperance, justice, or fortitude.

How often do your actions exhibit all these qualities? How hasty and imprudent you frequently are even in

doing good! How often you show the absence of that moderation which does every thing at the right time and in the right way, and with proper regard for the feelings of others! How often, especially, are you deficient in the virtue of fortitude! You are so inconstant, bent this way and that by circumstances, as a reed by the wind.

To do all that Jesus commands does not mean, to conform to the holy will of God in some things only, but to regulate by it all our doings, every thought and every desire. In order to understand, without mistakes, His wishes and demands we must listen attentively to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. It is, therefore, necessary to keep God continually in our thoughts, to walk before him in the spirit of meditation, and to avoid all useless distractions.

Oh, how remiss you are in this regard! It is true you pray daily: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," but, in reality, you have no will for any thing unpleasant to nature. Instead of walking in the presence of God in order to hear the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and to follow them, you hardly ever think of God during the day, and you listen, not to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, but to the voice of the world. All your wishes, all your longings, are to succeed in business, to become rich, to be honored, to procure for yourself the pleasures of this life, and to enjoy them as long as possible. Hence your continual distraction and your feeling of loneliness when you are separated from the society of men. This is also the

cause of your idling away your precious time in the society of persons who are dangerous to you and often lead you into temptation.

To do all that Jesus commands signifies also to make use of *all those means* through which we may obtain divine graces. These means are prayer, spiritual reading, the listening to the divine Word, the hearing of Mass, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and its frequent devout reception.

I ask of you: Do you employ these means? Do you do all that Jesus demands of you? Do you say your morning and evening prayers, and in such a manner that you really pray in spirit and in truth, or do you only say them from habit, and with incessant distractions? Is your prayer such that it unites you all day long to God according to the words of Christ: "You must pray always." What do you read? Are you thoroughly instructed as a child of the Church and as these incredulous times demand, or do you read those worldly books, which amuse, rather than those which instruct?

Do you hear Mass daily with piety? Do you assist faithfully at the divine sacrifice? Do you visit regularly the Blessed Sacrament, and receive Jesus frequently into your heart? If not, how can you presume to think that you follow the injunction of the Blessed Virgin: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye."

To do all that Jesus demands means, to fulfill joyfully, and with the utmost confidence in God, all that He asks of us. "The Lord loves a cheerful giver," as the Holy Ghost assures us. If we are not animated by this

sentiment, then do we want generosity, zeal, and perseverance in His service. Christian! why are you so faint-hearted and despondent? Shame on you!

To do all that Jesus asks signifies, to fulfill His word notwithstanding the hinderances we may encounter. It means to receive humbly, as from His hands, all the trials we meet in His service, to unite them with His sufferings and bear them for love of Him.

To do all that Jesus demands means, lastly, not only to take care of our own salvation, but also to promote that of our neighbor and to assist him spiritually and corporally, for time and eternity, in remembrance of that assurance of Christ: "Whatsoever ye do to the least of mine, ye do to me."

How cold is your zeal for souls! How little exertion you make for the spiritual welfare of your neighbor, even of those who live with you under the same roof!

Christians! you who have listened to my words, do you now understand the meaning of the admonition of the Blessed Virgin: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." Do it henceforward, and you will partake of the marriage feast of the Lamb, the Bridegroom of your soul.

You will partake of it here upon earth by the joy which the presence of Christ in your heart will bring, and one day you will partake of it in heaven near the throne of God, in the company of your Bridegroom, who will be yours for all eternity! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"There was a marriage in Cana in Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there; and Jesus was also invited and His disciples."—John 2.

JESUS, Mary and the disciples appear at a feast. Since the fall of Adam we live in a vale of tears, and man, even in his old age, can say with Jacob: "I have lived only a few years, and these were filled with anxiety and sorrow." Let us only consider how miserably man commences life, and how many tears are shed by the child, even before it knows that it suffers. And when he has reached the years of discretion, to how much mental and physical suffering is man subjected, especially as his life nears its close, and the hour approaches in which death ends his earthly career.

But in this vale of sorrow, there are also moments of joy, and these can and should assist us in saving our souls.

Unhappily, this is but seldom the case.

Only too often entertainments become snares laid for us by Satan; they become occasions of sin, and prevent our progress in the path of salvation. Why so?

Let us examine this point to-day.

O Mary, thou who by thy presence didst comfort the hearts of the newly-married couple, and didst edify all present by thy example, pray that we may

learn how to sanctify our recreations, and make them profitable for our souls!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

If we desire our recreations to become means of serving God, then we must keep the following rules before our eyes:

First, the amusement must, in itself, be innocent and pleasing to God. This was the case with the feast at Cana, which was held in honor of a newly-married couple. Nothing objectionable in this; for, matrimony was instituted by God in Paradise, and raised by Jesus to the dignity of a Sacrament.

Before we participate in an entertainment, we ought first to make ourselves acquainted with its nature, and to make sure that it will not be an occasion of grievous temptations. That such precautions are necessary becomes evident, if we consider the dangers that attend dances, balls, plays, and the so-called parties and picnics, which go to make up the round of popular amusements. Inducements to attend these recreations are pressing and frequent, as a glance at the placards, disfiguring every street corner, with their manifold devices to catch the eye of the public, will convince us! It can not, therefore, be out of place to give a few rules of conduct for those who wish to participate in these amusements.

First, in regard to dances and balls, they must learn to make a distinction. There are dances, which, as

they do not give rise to commotions of the senses or undue excitement, are without danger; and to amuse oneself in these is certainly harmless, always provided that it be done with moderation.

But there are dances which, when participated in with persons of different sexes, give rise to temptations, to sins against purity; and such dances are to be avoided, as they can not fail to tarnish the conscience.

I must further remark that in order to enjoy innocently the pleasures of a ball, one must in other respects also avoid exciting temptations. Unfortunately, this happens only too often. People sometimes take liberties in their manner of dressing which is often more scandalous than dancing itself.

Hence, but few masquerade balls can be counted amongst innocent amusements. The masks themselves, or the conduct of the persons who use them, are frequently the cause of scandal and corruption. You are not allowed to frequent such balls.

Another question in regard to balls, touches the place where they are held, and the class of people who patronize them. What a difference there is in this respect between a select ball and one held in a public dancing-house!

Balls which are open to all comers and take place in common drinking-saloons, must be avoided; they are, without exception, fraught with danger, and are only frequented in order to indulge in strong drinks and excesses of the lowest kind.

As far as visiting the theater is concerned, there would be no objection to it, were the performances, as in olden times, moral and instructive.

But in our days, the theater is misused to such an extent that it is often not less dangerous to attend plays, than to go to a ball, not to mention the infamous so-called variety-theaters, which abound in large cities, and in which all Christian virtue and all decency are outraged. The largest and most fashionable theaters bring on the stage but few plays, that are altogether unobjectionable and produce no dangerous impressions. It would be quite a different thing if people only went to the theater to see classical plays, or to hear an opera for the sake, principally, of the music. But this seldom happens. Further, a person once in the habit of frequenting the theater, will not be over-exacting about the nature of the play. Therefore, the ordinary advice is: avoid theaters.

I have also to say a few words on the subject of parties and picnics.

Here also we must use discrimination. If a party is but a sort of family entertainment, no objection can be raised, although, even then, people sometimes allow themselves excesses. There is, as is well known, one kind of parties where young people of both sexes come together and overstep all bounds of decorum. People say it is only in jest! But they should remember the admonition of St. Peter Chrysologus: "You can not frolic with Satan, and yet one day rejoice with Christ."

In regard to picnics, the same remark may be made. It is certainly harmless when a few families assemble to amuse themselves in the open air; and nothing can be said against it, if even a great many join in such a gathering. The chief question is: In what do the amusements consist? If otherwise innocent gatherings are broken up as the day draws to a close, and not prolonged far into the night, if they are kept free from improper dances and drunkenness, no one can complain.

But it is no excuse to say that the proceeds of an excursion are for a good purpose, for a school, or a church. Upon assistance which is obtained by opening wide the gates of scandal, the blessing of the Almighty does not descend, as experience has taught us; and, moreover, the end does not justify the means.

I ask, secondly: How should one conduct himself at allowable entertainments? I say that even if the amusement is entirely without danger to the soul, and altogether innocent, it should still be regarded only as a mental and physical recreation, which we allow ourselves, in order to go with renewed strength to our daily labor, and to fulfill more cheerfully the duties of our station in life.

Thirdly: It is even praiseworthy to participate in an entertainment, when brotherly love demands it, as to express our sympathy with our neighbor's good fortune, which was the case with Jesus and Mary at the marriage of Cana.

Fourthly: We must note well who are to take part

in the entertainment; for, if we are not sure of our company, we can not be surprised if we have scandalous conduct obtruded upon our notice.

Fifthly: We must practise self-abnegation and moderation in our amusements. This was done by the guests at Cana. They had before them the example of Jesus, Mary and the disciples of Christ. Hence they remained so orderly and temperate. Christ would certainly not have changed the water into delicious wine, had He seen that those present were in danger of abusing His miracle by intemperance.

Lastly, at such amusements we must never forget the value of time, for, if indulged in merely for their own sake, they are not recreation, but a waste of life. Let us beware lest we share the regret of worldlings and sinners: "We have wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity" (Wisd. 5, 7). Christ's warning refers to this when He says: "The world will rejoice, but their joy will soon change to sorrow."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."—Matt. 8.

THE leper of whom we read in to-day's Gospel believes that Christ has the power to heal him, and he is not mistaken; Christ, stretching forth His hand, said: "I will, be thou made clean!"

What leprosy is to the body, that sin is to the soul. Many of the children of the Church, many who call upon Jesus, are covered with this leprosy. They believe in His Power and Will to cleanse them from sin, and yet they are not cleansed, and why not? Because they do not earnestly will it.

It often happens that the sinner, while apparently desirous of conversion, has in reality not the will. And why? That is the question we shall answer to-day.

O Mary, thou purest of the pure, pray that we may be filled with a true desire to be cleansed from the leprosy of sin, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

cried the leper. How much more natural it is for us children of the Church to address Christ in these words, since we know so much better than the leper in the Gospel who Jesus is, and why He came into the world.

The leper did not doubt that Christ possessed the power to heal him, but he was not certain of Christ's willingness to perform a miracle.

In regard to the leprosy of sin, we have no reason to doubt Christ's willingness to cleanse us. For this He came into the world, for this He sacrificed Himself on the cross, for this He gave His blood and life, for this He established His Church. Do not the Apostles teach us to say: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins?" To give us a remedy against sin, Christ called us to His holy Church, freed us in baptism from the inherited leprosy of our nature, and gave us access to all the Sacraments, those fountains of grace for the purification of souls.

Verily then Jesus is willing. If we are not cleansed, in whom lies the fault? In ourselves. The sinner is wanting in real sincerity and in the earnest desire of being cleansed. And why? Because he feels his own misery too imperfectly. He is not sufficiently disgusted with sin; he is not thoroughly penetrated with fear at the consequences of sin.

The leper was disgusted with himself. Leprosy is, as is well known, a revolting disease, and every one is careful to avoid those who are stricken with it.

But what is such a disease compared to the disfig-

urement of sin, which makes us resemble Satan in repulsiveness? Not only mortal, but even venial sin is leprosy. Not a moral fault but is more disgusting to God than all the ulcers and sores in the whole world.

Could the sinner but see himself, were he aware of how his soul is deformed by sin, how intense would be his desire, how great his haste to go to Jesus and beg of Him to be cleansed. Unfortunately, the sinner is seldom thoroughly conscious of his deplorable state. He generally believes that his moral condition is not so bad, and, regarding his sins as human weaknesses, consoles himself with the thought that there are others who are worse. He fails to consider God's horror of sin, the disgust of the angels and saints, who have reason to be ashamed of him if he regards himself in communion with them, or perhaps even calls them his brothers and his sisters. He does not realize that the sight of his sins drives away his guardian angel, all angels, in fact, and saints. He never thinks of the misfortune into which sin has precipitated him, robbing his good works of all merit, and rendering him unable to earn any thing for heaven; how sin has opened the gates of hell, so that he is liable at any moment to fall into the abyss, where he must bewail in eternal torments those sins which he here committed with so little concern.

He who stains his soul with many venial sins can not consider how these prevent him from lessening the flow of divine grace, diminish his merits, how they augment the debt that is to be paid in purgatory. Moreover,

he can not reflect on the danger his waywardness exposes him to of falling into grievous sin.

The consequence of this thoughtlessness is that the sinner hastens not to seek Jesus, and to approach Him in the person of His minister to receive, after sincere repentance, the forgiveness of his transgressions.

Secondly.—The sinner goes to confession and apparently is desirous of being cleansed from the leprosy of his sin, but in reality he is very indifferent. How few of those to whom sin has become a habit—a class of sinners who especially resemble the leper—examine themselves conscientiously before confession on the number of their mortal sins and the circumstances that affect the nature of their transgressions. The leper feels day and night the misery of his disease, and knows every place where it has settled. The habitual sinner does not take the trouble to consider the evil of sin on his soul, and hardly deems it necessary to examine his conscience. Why? He is not really in earnest to be converted.

If it were a bodily illness he would immediately send for a physician, and explain minutely all the symptoms of his disease; but as the condition of his soul is a matter of little concern to him, he gives but a superficial account of its state, and not unfrequently makes a bad confession. It but seldom happens that a habitual sinner accuses himself fully and freely without aid from the priest. Jesus stretched out his hand and touched the leper. The priest should spiritually do the same to the sinner by his words, but as the sinner

has not thoroughly opened his heart, the priest is not able to touch the affected parts and heal them by words of advice.

The sinner confesses, but he has not the earnest desire to make a frank and open declaration of his faults. He is satisfied with a lame, cursory accusation, hoping that the confessor will impart a speedy absolution, and not trouble him with many questions. He is not anxious about the future, how he may avoid relapses, anticipate temptations or combat them, when they do assault him, with effectual weapons.

The sinner, moreover, has not the determination to use the proper means to obtain grace and to advance in the ways of virtue, namely, prayer, spiritual reading, the reception of the Sacraments.

Happy are you, O sinner, if you are conscious that you are earnest in your desire to be converted, to avoid all occasions of committing sin, and to resist temptations, so that you can truthfully say before Jesus and his minister: I will. Christ will say the same to you. And if you unite your will with His, do not doubt that you will be cleansed from the leprosy of your sin through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Only say the word and my servant shall be healed."—Matt. 8.

IN to-day's Gospel two distressed men approach Jesus and ask help; the leper and the afflicted father. Both evinced great confidence, and they were not disappointed. Their confidence procured them help, and that by a miracle.

This fact points to a noble, important, and consoling virtue of Christian life, which has often obtained most wondrous help from God. It is the virtue of confidence in the assistance of God. A sermon on this subject is the more needed, because many trust God too little. These think of the justice to God, of His menaces to sinners, but not of His goodness and mercy; they forget that he is their Creator and Father; they forget what He has done for them, and is continually doing, and what He is ever ready to do for all who approach Him confidingly. In short:

Man does not think frequently enough, how noble and consoling, how meritorious before God is this trust which we place in His help.

Let us consider this to-day.

O Mary, Mother of holy hope, fill our hearts with entire trust in God that we may obtain divine grace through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The leper trusts that Jesus will heal him; the centurion has faith that Jesus will save his dying servant, and both are rewarded.

Are these two the only ones who need help, and who must seek this help through Jesus? Certainly not! We live upon this earth surrounded by numberless cares for our temporal well-being, and are at the same time harassed by many needs of the soul.

It is Jesus, who is able to aid us in all these temporal and spiritual distresses. Let us hasten to Him, let us trust.

Confidence is the condition on which we shall obtain help, as St. James assures us, as well as the voice of our own hearts.

Whoever distrusts Christ's willingness or power to help us, when he appproaches Him in prayer, does not honor God, but rather dishonors Him. On the other hand, to approach Jesus with full confidence, how ennobling, consoling an act to ourselves, how pleasing and effective with God!

First, it is an act by which not only one or other of God's perfections is worshipped and praised, but an act by which all of them are recognized. He who only fears God and trembles, gives testimony by his fear to the Justice of the Almighty; but he who *trusts* in the Almighty confesses Him to be the source of all that is good—glorifies Him in all His infinite perfections. He professes belief in the existence of God, he exalts His Omniscience, because he implicitly declares that He knows every thing, even his wants, and is

ready to hear every suppliant prayer. He confesses by his confidence God's Omnipotence, Wisdom, Goodness, Truthfulness, and Fidelity. What a noble and sanctifying act! Jesus is God. Let us, therefore, confide in Him.

The efficaciousness of our trust in Jesus is confirmed most cheeringly by the Holy Ghost in the ninetieth Psalm, when He says: "He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Jacob. He shall say to the Lord: Thou art my protector and my refuge." How great an assurance does the Almighty give to those who trust in Him! "His truth shall compass thee with a shield; thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night or of the noon-day devil. A thousand shall fall on thy right side and ten thousand at thy left, but it shall not come nigh thee." Why? Listen to the answer. "Because he has hoped in me, I will deliver him.—He shall cry to me and I will hear him—I am with him in tribulation—I will deliver him, and I will glorify him."

Trust in Jesus will take still deeper root in our hearts if we regard Him as at once both God and man, and consider that it is He Himself, our Saviour and Redeemer, who invites us to this confidence.

It is true our hearts may feel heavy and be in danger of becoming weary and faint on account of all the sorrows and needs which oppress soul and body; but how can that diminish our trust in the goodness and power of our heavenly Mediator, if with a lively faith we call to mind His teachings, what He has done for

mankind collectively, and each individual in particular?

Do temporal needs frighten us? We know how solemnly He has assured us of His assistance. Does not Christ tell us: "Behold the lilies of the field, the grass of the earth, and the birds of the air! See how My Father takes care of them. How much more will He take care of you who are His children!

Let the wickedness of your enemies be ever so great, let them be high and mighty. Trust in God. The very hairs of your head are numbered, and not one of them falls without the will of your Father who is in heaven. If our mind is troubled, if temptations surround us, let us listen to the voice of Jesus: "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them . . . . and no man shall snatch them out of my hand. That which my Father hath given me, is greater than all." Therefore, trust in God! Should the most powerful temptations beset you, the holy name of Jesus alone is able to shield you, and so long as your lips devoutly pronounce it, no power of persecution, however great, can overwhelm you.

Or if fear of sin which you formerly committed befalls you; if you tremble at the thought that heaven has not forgiven them, approach Jesus. Remember the words of St. John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming towards him: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." Even should you have been so unfortunate as to relapse into sin, you know, as a well instructed child of

the Church, that there is no sin or number of sins so great that they can not, through the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, be effaced in the Sacrament of Penance. Think of all the relations in which Christ stands to you, and how every one of them calls upon you to trust! Is He not, while Redeemer, also our Father through whom we regained the right to be called children of God? With what confidence does a son approach his father when he knows that his father desires above all things the welfare of his children, and that he wishes to help them in need. If this be so of an earthly father how much more certain is it of Christ who is truly our Father!

Did He not relate the parable of the prodigal son, and tell of the kindness and love of the father who pardoned and embraced his child returning from the path of evil?

Further, Jesus, as Son of God who became man for us, is our Brother. How consoled a man feels in his troubles when he has a brother who, he is convinced, loves him and has the power to help him! How great therefore should be our trust in Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of hosts, who, as the Apostle assures us, did not hesitate to call us His brothers. A good brother rejoices when it is in his power to assist us. What a reason to trust when we think of Jesus, call Him Brother, and approach Him as such!

A man who is harassed and in danger, and knows that his friend can offer assistance, goes to him for aid, because he is a friend. What an incentive to go con-

fidingly to Christ when we are afflicted. He calls himself our Friend. And what a Friend He is! No one, says Jesus, shows greater sincerity of friendship than he, who gives his life for his friend. This—Christ has done for us, and how painful, yet how willing, was the sacrifice. "A true friend is a second self," says an old proverb, and it is Christ in whom this saying is literally fulfilled. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did to me." A man goes trustingly to another to ask assistance, especially when experience has taught him how good this person is, and how often he has aided him. What a spur this thought contains for us to go confidingly to Christ. All, however, depends on our being in such a state, and on our living in such a manner, that we may justly call Jesus our Father, Brother and Friend, and that when He bestows His divine graces upon us, we do not misuse them to His sorrow and offense. Otherwise we call Him in vain Father, Brother, Friend. "What fellowship hath light with darkness?" says the Apostle.

We must therefore, above all, be reconciled to God by a true reformation of heart, and then we can approach His throne and expect help from Him for every need of body and soul. Living in this peaceful confidence, we shall feel the courage which St. Teresa experienced when Christ appeared to her and said: "Teresa, fear not! *I am with thee!*"

Confidence raises us above our natural weakness. It supplies us with strength divine, and enables us to mount to the high realms of pure love where

dwell the blessed inhabitants of heaven—to the very throne of God.

When about to depart this life and to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, what a pledge of a happy death, if with His name in our heart, we can lay ourselves trustingly in the arms of His infinite mercy! We shall then feel the comfort which St. Francis Xavier felt when in his last moment he pressed the crucifix to his heart, saying: "In Thee, O Lord, I have hoped, let me never be put to confusion." Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And Jesus, hearing this, marvelled."—Matt. 8.

AS the Gospel tells us, Jesus marvelled at the faith of the centurion who begged Him to heal his child.—Jesus marvelled at the faith of this man!

Christians, when we consider all that God has done for the human race, through how many voices He has revealed Himself to it, how He clothed Himself with our nature, and wrought numberless miracles, both personally and through others who believed in Him, we have reason to be astonished that all mankind has not long since shared this faith, and that, notwithstanding His coming upon earth, so many souls are lost by their own fault. And yet that this is so, Christ, the future Judge Himself assures us when He says: "Many are called, but few are chosen!"

That this is the fault of man alone, I shall endeavor to prove to-day.

O Mary, thou who didst believe, and whom, therefore, Elizabeth called blessed, pray for us that we may obtain the blessing of a living faith!

NOTE.—This subject has already been treated; but as these sermons comprise a course of three years, a yearly repetition of the same subject may easily be avoided; moreover, the topic is one to which it is well to draw the attention of the people more than once. Remark also that the treatment of the subject is different.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

God said: "Let there be light!" and there was light. The same Word Who called forth this light, came into the world, and diffused light over the world of men's minds. Yet how many still remain in darkness! Why? Because men voluntarily close their eyes and live in the darkness of unbelief and irreligion, or if they have faith, it is a faith which is dead. This is the cause of their eternal destruction, and we have no reason to marvel at it.

Millions of men since Christ's coming have lived, and still live, in the darkness of unbelief. As this unbelief is intentional, it is certainly a matter of astonishment.

St. Paul said that the heathens, even in his time, were inexcusable for not recognizing God as the Creator and Ruler of the Universe and for not caring what He demands of His creatures, or how they should live in order to fulfill His will and gain heaven.

In ancient times, a philosopher once remarked to the heathen: "You do not find a hut in the forest without saying to yourself: Some one made it. And is it possible that you can look at the great structure of the world, of heaven and earth, without exclaiming: Some one must have made both me and this great world?—God!"

In confirmmation of these words, let me only point to three phases of nature to prove how inexcusable it is in man, after he has arrived at the age of dis-

cretion, not to believe in a God and Creator by Whom every thing was called into existence, and by Whom every thing is preserved.

Let us cast our eyes first upon the stars and observe the firmament simply as it strikes the beholder, and without astronominal knowledge. We perceive before all things the rising and setting of the sun, and the regular movements of the starry hosts, and ask: Can any human being, who knows with what regularity the sun has risen and set for 5000 years, never a second too early or too late, according to the season, can such a one imagine that no one has made this luminious body, that no mind has regulated its path, or the course of the stars? Impossible! if his thoughts be not disturbed by passion. The same may be said if we reflect on the constant changes of the moon. Must not every one who is able to reason believe that there is Some One, Who, being from all eternity, is both the Creator and Ruler of the Universe,—God?

Let us turn our eyes to the earth and consider what the animal and vegetable world, which surround us, suggests. Who gives each separate plant the power to bring forth this and no other fruit? Who has ordained that a flower of such form and color shall grow up from this particular seed, and from no other? Who says to one grain of seed, produce oats, and to another, produce wheat? This fact becomes still more striking when we fix our attention upon the fruit-trees. There are orange, apple and pear-trees of all possible vari-

eties in the same orchard. Who makes the orange-tree produce its juicy and deliciously-flavored fruit out of the tasteless wood and earth, if it be not He Whose Will is omnipotent?

Regarding ourselves, we see that we move, that we nourish our body, and yet we really know not how it is done. Above all, when we meditate upon the powers of the mind, we must, as sensible beings, recognize a God, a Creator. And if we think of Him, how is it possible that we are not compelled to ask: What does this God and Lord demand of us that we may be pleasing in His sight, and that it may go well with us here and hereafter?

Furthermore, how is it comprehensible that nations like the Chinese, the ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians did not understand immediately the folly of idolatry when the Gospel was preached to them; that, instead of receiving the teachers of the divine Word with rejoicing, they persecuted them with fire and sword, as do even pagan nations to this very hour?

Have we not cause to be astonished at the unbelief of the heathen? Have we no cause to marvel?

Similar reproaches might be addressed to all unbelievers, be they Jews or heretics. The Jews were acquainted with the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. Christ referred to this when he said: "This is written of me." He walked among them as man never walked among men, worked miracles, raised the dead—and yet they cried: "Crucify Him!" He

rose from the grave, and yet—they failed to recognize Him, and are still waiting for the Messiah to come. How is it possible that these intelligent Jews, so sharp-sighted in other matters can be so blind in this respect! They possess the books of the Old Testament and watch over them carefully. They have counted every letter in them, and know exactly how many there are, and which is the first, the middle and the last! They read the prophecy of Aggæus, which distinctly says that the Messiah would appear in that temple which for eighteen hundred years has lain in ruins. They read the prophecies of Daniel which tell them the time the Messiah was to come, suffer and die, after which the temple would be destroyed.

All this has taken place, all these events have become historical facts, and yet they await the arrival of the Messiah! They are like men who await the rising of the sun, while he is sending down around and about them his life-giving beams.—Incomprehensible!

The same may be said of heretics; they believe in Christ, believe the words: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her"—the Church—whom Christ founded upon a rock. And again: "I will remain with you all days until the end of time." And further: "And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen."—"He that believeth not shall be condemned." Over one hundred millions of men believe this, and call themselves Christians, yet have

separated from the first Church and remain thus separated. Certainly they are a just object of astonishment to us!

The obstinacy of heretics in not returning to the first Church would be more easily understood were it only a question of some articles of faith. But this is not the case. To all those who belive in Christ and in Holy Writ as the Word of God, the entire question about the authenticity of the Church, is historic. No heretic can deny that Christ has asserted several times most solemnly that His Church should remain unchanged until the end of time. If this be accepted as a truth, the question is simply this: Which of the Churches calling themselves Christian can prove that she dates from the Apostles and is the first Church? That one must be the true Church.

No one denies that the Catholic Church is the first. Well then, who can justify those who separate from her? And who can uphold those who have followed them? And yet millions of men do this. Many even think they are doing right; they pray to Christ, but yet accuse Him of lying, when they say that the first Church, which is the Catholic Church, has erred, notwithstanding His solemn assurance that this should never happen.

If these heretics did not believe in Christ or the Gospel, we could comprehend it, but as it is, what can we say? They frequently lead a moral life, believe in Christ and in the Bible, and yet, for so many hundreds of years they have remained separated from

the Church and her infallible doctrines. What a subject to marvel at!

But our astonishment will increase if we consider the dead faith of so many who call themselves Catholics; when we reflect how it is that people, who believe in the truth of the Church and the promises of faith, who even are ready to shed their blood for it, live, notwithstanding, as if they knew no more of the path of salvation than do the heathen, from whom they differ only in so far that they are more culpable.

Yes, considering all this, we have more cause to be astonished at ourselves than at the conduct of Jews and heretics; for the reason that we, believing all that the saints believed, do not endeavor more seriously to live a holy life.

On the other hand, I am surprised that men living in the darkness of unbelief do not sink deeper than they do. It must be that the influence of education, special circumstances, and social position, keep them in check and prevent their entire corruption and debasement.

Therefore, O Lord, strengthen through our love for Thee our faith, in order that our lives may bear testimony thereto!—Amen!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

"And behold a great tempest arose in the sea."—Matt. 8.

THE life of man is a struggle. We can also call it justly a tempest. This comparison is also applicable to the Church which St. Peter called a ship, and the ark of Noah. How often is Eternity compared to a haven where we shall land when we shall have crossed the ocean of time. As there are storms upon every sea, even upon that which is called the Dead Sea, so there are tempests in the life of all—as we know too well by experience—especially in the lives of those who earnestly desire to serve God and win souls for heaven.

But heedless of the wildly raging tempest upon the ocean of life, let us have recourse to Christ, and thus steering in the right course, we shall escape the dangers, and never perish.

O Mary, thou star of the sea, pray for us that the Lord may assist us in the storms of life!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The cause of the storms which lash the sea from calmness into fury are *the winds which cross each other.*

To these winds I compare all the different influences of those circumstances which awaken the storms of hinderance and opposition against us and our endeavors to work for the kingdom of God.

There are, first, the storms of our own heart, roused by the tumult of passion. We need only consider one by one the sources of sin, principally the deadly sins, and question our own experience, and we can recognize the truth of what I just have said, namely that unbridled passions raise the storms which disturb our hearts.

And the names of these storms are: pride,—ambition,—vanity,—covetousness,—anger,—envy,—gluttony,—sensuality,—lust.

If in our hearts there were no trace of pride, covetousness, envy, enmity or impatience, how calmly would our lives pass on, how bright and clear would heaven reflect itself in the mirror of our soul!

We must therefore learn to master all these chief sins, all these disorderly inclinations of our heart, which are the consequence of the passions, excited to rebellion by original sin. In order to be able to do this we must hasten to Jesus, we must look upon Him as our model, and imitating Him, practice the virtues opposed to the disorderly inclinations of our heart.

If *pride* arouses the tempest, look upon the meekness of Jesus. He, who was God "debased Himself, taking the form of a servant." He appeared among men not as their Creator, Lord and King, but as their equal. He did not even appear in the splendor of tem-

poral majesty but in the humility of a child and of a poor artisan. And if the commencement of His career was so humble, how much more humiliating was His departure from this world, nailed like a criminal to the cross, between two thieves!

Cry to Him: O most humble Jesus, have pity on me and bestow upon me the humility of Thy Heart! Pray to Him sincerely thus, and the storm of temptation will abate.

Is it *covetousness*, avarice, or immoderate cares over the goods of this world which arouse the storm in your heart so powerfully that your conduct plainly manifests the intense desire you have to enrich yourself? The fury of this tempest is aggravated by the storm-clouds rising from the example of others who have succeeded in procuring wealth. How shall this storm be calmed? Cast your eyes upon Jesus Who for our sake became poor. In the cold of winter He was born in a stable and laid in a manger where He was warmed by the breath of animals. Mary, when she presented Jesus in the temple, offered in sacrifice the gifts of the poor, and our Lord ever remained poor as child, youth and man. He possessed no house, no place upon earth which He could call His own; He lived by alms, and at last was betrayed for money, and died destitute of every thing, upon the cross.

Look up to Him, pray to Him: Jesus come to my aid, and pour into my heart the love of holy poverty that I may not become a Judas to Thee! Pray thus, and the tempest of temptation will be allayed.

Is it *anger* which rouses the storm? Oh, how high swell the waves when the mind is tempest-tossed by this passion! To what fury does not anger rouse the mind when, excited to madness, man hesitates not to lay violent hands on those who are dearest to his heart—when under its influence he even takes his own life.

And what shall we say when we think of the horrors of war? Enmity and anger, moved by insult, raise the waves of animosity; thousands and hundreds of thousands endanger their lives to avenge the injury. Apart from this, however, do not countless occasions of irritation and impatience arise even in every-day life? We excuse ourselves and, laying the fault upon our irritable temperament, say we can not help it.

Look upon Jesus and listen to His words: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." Think of the mildness of Jesus, Who even upon the cross prayed for his murderers, and who shed His last drop of blood for them; think of Him, and the storm of temptation will abate.

Does *envy* torment you? No doubt it is this temptation which disquiets the minds of many who number themselves among the good and perfect. The words of St. Ambrose: "Envy burns even in the hearts of the saints," will ever remain a memorable saying. And why? Because envy approaches us under cover of zeal; we seem to be all aflame for the honor of God, while in reality it is only envy that animates us.

What remedy is there for this vice? Look upon Jesus Who has done for each soul individually what He did

for all; Who will one day share His glory and bliss in Heaven with all, and through Whom in communion with the saints we have all become brothers and sisters and joint-heirs of heaven. Call to Him: O most loving and generous Jesus! Thou Who hast done for each soul what Thou didst for all, grant that for love of Thee I may love all men as myself and wish them only good. Pray thus, and the storm will subside.

Further, who is not aquainted with the temptations of *intemperance?* Turn your eyes upon Jesus in the wilderness where He remained without food or drink. Think of Him on the cross, where to refresh Him, they offered Him vinegar and gall. Call on Him and, strengthened by His grace, you will be able to break the force of habit, and the storm of temptation will be calmed.

The wild waves of *impurity*, especially, disturb the peace of many hearts. Whilst the storm rages, irresolute souls find it difficult—they almost imagine impossible—to resist its violence. Soul in temptation! look upon Jesus torn and bleeding on the cross, and listen to the praises entoned by the virgin souls who follow the Lamb.

Look at Jesus, the King of virgins; embracing the cross, walk in the spirit of self-abnegation, then aided by Him you will find yourself strengthened, and by the power of His holy name you will overcome the temptation. Receive Him frequently in the Most Holy Sacrament, and the tempest in your heart will subside.

External circumstances frequently call forth commo-

tions in the human heart. The first is: *care* for the necessities of life, which, no doubt, gives rise to troubles and storms. Look up to Jesus, confide in Him, our Father in Heaven, who clothes the lilies of the field and who nourishes the sparrows; He thinks of you,—He knows what you need. Trust in Him, and the storm will be calmed.

Does *sickness* befall you? are you tormented by fear that you may never recover? look at Jesus and say with the leper in the Gospel: "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." Say to Him, full of trusting love: "Lord, Thy will be done!" and the storm of despondency will subside.

If the tempest of *calumny* roars around you, look at Jesus and remember how He was numbered among thieves and murderers. Remember that He is your *Judge*, not men nor angels, and the storm in your heart will abate.

Are you assailed by *persecution* for the sake of justice? Look at Jesus and think of His example, His word: "If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you." No, not one hair falls from your head without His knowledge, without the will of His heavenly Father. Should you even suffer martyrdom—what a grace!—it would carry you straight from earth to heaven.

If, however, no martyr's death opens to you the portals of heaven, all the suffering which you patiently endure in this world will serve as an earthly purgatory, and increase your weight of glory in the scales of eternal joy! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"But He was asleep."—Matt. 8.

JESUS sleeps, while the boat is cast about, the toy of the roaring tempest and surging sea. The disciples tremble and cry loudly for aid, but Jesus sleeps on and seems not to be disturbed by thoughts of them. Yet such is not really the case. He slept as man, but as God He knew the danger of the boat and of those who were in it. The disciples had nothing to fear. He was willing to help, and did help them, but not immediately, and, for the greater benefit of their souls, He chose to help them by a miracle.

Thus, to the soul assailed by the storms of temptation it often seems as if the Lord slept. He appears not to hear our prayers, to withdraw from us; and yet this is not the case; on the contrary, *exactly at the time when He seems not to listen to us, Jesus watches over us most compassionately, hears our prayers and comes to our aid in the way most beneficial to our souls.*

I will give you to-day my reason for this statement.

O Mary, grant that in our sufferings we bow submissively to the will of the Almighty, in order that our souls may profit thereby after thy example, O Mother of Sorrows and Queen of Martyrs!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

In adversity we call upon God and He appears not to hear us. He seems to sleep, His ears seem closed to our prayers, and yet this is not so. On the contrary, He often aids us the most efficaciously then, when He defers His help, or when He assists us in a manner different from that which we desire. Let us consider—in as far as human beings are capable of recognizing the ways of the Lord—the reasons which influence God to prove us in this way.

First.—He does it in order to strengthen our faith, our trust, our hope, our love, and to give us an opportunity to practise these divine virtues. If in our daily life we desire to learn or to excel in any thing we have to practise it diligently. Practice makes perfect. If this is so, who does not perceive at a mere glance what a splendid opportunity the Christian has to show his faith when, in adversity calling upon God and apparently not heard, he nevertheless faithfully believes and acknowledges: God knows my misery, it is He Who sent it to me; for not a hair of my head falls without His knowledge; He is my most kind and loving Father. He can and will help me, if it be for my good. I believe!

Is it not humiliating when unbelievers or followers of a false creed show more calmness, more patience in suffering than those who call themselves believers and children of holy Church. You kneel before the cross at home and in the church, and yet in life you turn away from it in fright, refusing to accept it. How inconsistent with yourself!

Yes, even if inner storms against holy hope well nigh drive us to despair, as many a saint has experienced, how sublime an act would it then be to hope with Abraham the Patriarch against hope itself! How great and meritorious an act of love if entire union with the will of God permitted us to desire nothing in adversity, loneliness, persecution and sorrow, save the patience to endure whatever God chooses to send us!

St. Francis of Sales was right when he said: In sorrow and misery a single "Deo Gratias" is worth more in the eyes of God than a thousand of them when we have all that goes to make life pleasant.

As a spiritual writer of our day justly observes: Even the angels have reason to envy us this opportunity of meriting, especially in regard to the sufferings which we have to bear through others, and which we have not deserved.

He says: "If there were any thing more sublime than to suffer innocently God the Father would have given it to His Incarnate Son to bear;" and I add: Neither would He have let Christ suffer so bitterly as to force Him to cry at the consummation of the work of Redemption on Calvary: "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Troubled soul, do you hear this? Why do you complain? Does God seem not to hear you? Make use of this precious opportunity, and give evidence of your faith, your hope, your love, and return thanks to Him.

We cry to Him in our suffering and seem not to be heard. Why? He desires to show us the way to

heaven. He wishes to teach us to walk till death in the path of tried virtue. He wishes to show us that the way to heaven is none other than the way of the cross.

Man vainly endeavors to find here below a paradise of happiness, undisturbed by suffering, and after death to enter heaven. Christ Himself went before us upon the path of sorrow and pain. A life in which suffering is borne for love of God, points like the hand of a guide to heaven; and in order not to forget this, God forces us to remember it, making us strive to imitate Christ in laboring after perfection.

For this the first thing necessary is: *thorough humility*. You suffer, the Lord does not seem to heed your prayers; beat your breast and say: I am not worthy that He should hear me. I have sinned so often, I have deserved still greater punishment. I am so imperfect, so covered with the dust and defilement of sin, I am not worthy that the Lord should listen to me and release me from my misery.

Humble yourself! How much you will gain if God seems not to hear you!

But, especially, the Lord tries us in this manner to strengthen us in the virtue of holy patience, and perfect our love for Him and our neighbor. Patience, as the Holy Ghost teaches us through St. James, hath a perfect work, for it strengthens in us, as we have already seen, the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, as well as the cardinal virtues, Wisdom, Temperance, Justice and Fortitude.

What a grand opportunity of meriting is afforded us when we suffer innocently, when we can perform acts of heroic charity by forgiving for love of God the authors of all our woe, when we can bear our complaints in silence, without easing ourselves by complaints to relatives and friends, giving all a perfect example of Christian patience.

Do you understand now, O suffering soul, how much you may gain and how greatly your eternal joy may be increased when God seems not to hear you?

And not only this, but furthermore such a life is equivalent to a martyrdom, as St. Bernard has said, a martyrdom which, though it kills not the body immediately, is the more painful on account of its duration.

Such sufferings, besides, may be sent us as a substitute for purgatory. And the exchange is in our favor, for, besides that the pains are shorter and less severe, they are also meritorious, which is not the case beyond the grave.

I remember once having visited a sick man who was suffering the most excruciating pains. At the foot of the bed was placed a large crucifix. When I endeavored to comfort him with the remark: "Such great pains do not last long and they must either soon cease, or God will take you from this world," the sick man said: "O Father, I suffer willingly, and let it last ever so long, I only hope that this is my purgatory." Then he gazed full of love and confidence upon the crucifix and continued: "I trust, O Lord Jesus, that Thou wilt let me

do penance here, and that Thou wilt take me from this bed of suffering to Thee in heaven."

May you all think the same, when you pray in affliction and seem not to be heard by God. Persevere in trusting, in suffering humbly and patiently as long as it pleases the Almighty, and you will surely stand high in heaven, where no longer prayers of petition, but prayers of praise will resound, and that too for those very dispensations of divine Providence which permitted us to experience storm-tossed lives on earth! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. 8.

"FATHER, they know not what they do," are the words of Christ upon the cross, and they are applicable to the conduct of most men. They do not consider what it means to offend God, they do not realize why man is placed upon earth, and that at the end of this life there is an eternity of joy or misery. Most men live unscrupulous, wicked lives, utterly careless of their salvation, among whom are even many children of the Church, who, from their youth up, have been warned of the many and great dangers of this world, but who, notwithstanding, continue to live in sin. This is an extremely dangerous condition.

But the opposite state—that of despondency, is also dangerous. Christ reproaches His disciples for being in this state, and while He points out to them the cause, He at the same time presents them with the cure.

For the benefit of your souls I will to-day expound this subject.

O Mary, thou strong woman, thou mighty tower of David, pray that we children of the Church militant, whose Queen thou art, may receive the grace to conquer death and hell!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The life of man is a combat, and the Church to which we belong is the Church militant. This truth bears directly on the subject of my discourse.

The first quality requisite in a soldier is courage. Give soldiers the best weapons, let the number of their enemies be thrice, nay ten times less than their own, yet if despondency and fear fill their hearts, victory will leave their banner; perhaps the first encounter will witness their cowardly flight. The same applies to the timid soldiers of the Church militant.

Hence, if you would battle and conquer in union with the Church, avoid that timidity which clouds the mind with darkness.

If a commander full of courage meets the enemy, despite advantages on the other side, he will find ways and means to conquer. If, however, he be wanting in valor or courage, he will retreat or surrender, though protected by walls and ramparts. This is strictly true of those children of the Church who fight for God and the salvation of souls. We must first of all clearly recognize what God demands of us, what we have to battle for, against what enemies, passions and temptations we must fight. We must further learn by what ways we must advance, how to forestall temptations, how to repel them when they set upon us without notice.

The greatest obstacle to a clear perception of our line of conduct is faint-heartedness, which deprives our soul of vigor and decision.

The soldier needs not only courage to withstand

the foe, but also determination to attack and rout him. It has frequently happened that a small army has put to flight and conquered a much larger one, because it was ready and eager for the fray, and did not even allow the opposing forces to concentrate their strength.

The same may be said of the children of God's Church. Timid souls perhaps see clearly what they must do to conquer, but they lack determination; they despair, and believe that they are unable to complete what they have begun. What a dangerous state of mind this is! The more timid they become, the bolder Satan grows, and thus they are driven to despondency and at last to despair.

In order to conquer, an army needs reliance on its own strength; it needs good weapons and perfect familiarity with their use; moreover, the men must be strong enough to endure the hardships of a campaign. The same conditions are necessary for our success in the warfare for God and the salvation of our souls.

There are many and splendid weapons at our disposal. St. Paul enumerates them in the well-known words: "Wherefore take unto you the armor of God, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. . . . And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the sword of God)" (Ephes. 6, 13).

Each of these weapons, fearlessly used, will procure us victory. Faint-heartedness, however, takes away

all strength, as every one will readily perceive; for it does not love truth, but, rather, follows the vain glimmer of a false light, and, as Holy Writ says, "trembles for fear where there is no fear" (Ps. 13, 5).

The faint-hearted heeds not the call of truth to trust in the protection of God and to walk with fervor in the path of duty; he says with the slothful man of Holy Writ: "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the midst of the streets."

Faint-heartedness is not a breast-plate of steel, but soft and yielding as wax.

Faint-heartedness can not furnish shoes wherewith to proceed on the path of salvation with heroic resolution, but sends us forth barefooted.

Faint-heartedness is no shield of faith from which the darts of temptation rebound, but it leaves us defenseless in the face of the enemy.

Faint-heartedness is no protecting helmet, but rather marks us out for the blows of the enemy.

Faint-heartedness is no victorious sword, but a bending reed.

How well protected is the soul that courageously confesses the truth, practises justice, and, strengthened by frequent holy Communion, remains firm in her resolves, who, well instructed in her religion, firm in faith, ever mindful of her last end and destiny, marches on boldly without swerving from her path. Such a soul will be victorious.

Finally, not till the combat is over can the victory be proclaimed. A partial or temporary retreat is not

decisive; he who retains possession of the field in the end will wear the laurels of victory.

The same is true in the struggle for God and for the salvation of our souls: "He that shall persevere to the end, shall be saved."

Confidence in God strengthens in us those sentiments with which we should leave this world: "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let we never be put to confusion." Blessed is he who, when the darkness of death falls upon his heavenward-gazing eyes, has these words upon his lips; he has ended victoriously in the Lord.

What is the cause of our lack of courage? It is that same insufficient faith for which Christ reproved His disciples: "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" Man would have reason to fear and despond when the storms of life roar around him, did he depend upon the aid of men. But one who has a living faith, whose mind is inundated with light from above, who is penetrated with the motives that the true religion inculcates for confidence in God, can not fall into the hands of faint-heartedness. He trusts in the goodness of the Creator and the merits of Jesus Christ, and in this confidence is saved!—Amen!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field."—Matt. 13.

HOLY Writ compares the working out of our salvation and the using of divine grace to different occupations of men, such as building, fishing and commerce. In to-day's Gospel our Lord draws His comparison from a field which a husbandman sows with good seed. The field is the heart of man, the husbandman is the Lord, and the seeds are the communications of His grace, which through our co-operation bring forth fruit for eternal life.

Unhappily, this seed frequently fails to bring forth that fruit which Christ expected to reap when he intrusted it to our hearts.

The enemy of God, the enemy of the children of God, the Evil One, endeavors to prevent the growth of the seed, and it is our duty to check his attempts. And how can this be done?

We will consider this question to-day.

O Mary, pray for us, that we may be filled with the desire to prepare our heart for the Lord, and that we may keep it closed to all evil influences!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

We have but one thing to care for here on earth, and that is to serve God, to know and fulfill His holy will, and to save our souls. We shall accomplish this task by earnestly endeavoring to co-operate with the divine grace which God bestows upon us for the growth of virtue in our hearts, and by eradicating from them all evil inclinations.

Christ, as I said, compares the inspirations of His grace to seed which falls into the hearts of men. And how early, how ceaselessly, and in what manifold ways this seed falls into our hearts!

First, the sight of the entire world reminds us daily and hourly of the power, greatness, majesty, wisdom, and goodness of God, and is a perpetual admonition to serve God, and gather fruit for eternity, to employ for this end all the means which God has given us, to ask Him for help, return thanks for benefits received, and render Him all the honor in our power.

Were we always to bear in mind how perfectly nature fulfills the will of God, how with all its strength it strives after perfection; further, were we to remember how every breath we draw, every drop of water we drink, every morsel of bread we eat, each thread of our clothes is a gift of God, what an incentive would not these thoughts be to serve God, to praise Him and to do His holy will!

In the life of St. Paul of the Cross we read that when

he walked through the fields he sometimes would beat the grass with a stick, and say to the flowers: "Be silent!" He felt ashamed at the sight of them, and thought: Oh, that I served God as perfectly as you do, and that the virtues of my life were as fragrant as you

How precious is the seed which God by the hand of nature sows upon the field of our heart to animate us in the service of our Creator!

Let us consider the effects of interior grace, and the influence it exercises over us, as also the instruction we receive as children of the Church.

First: In regard to the bestowing of His graces, what has God not done, and what is He not daily doing for us? The good seed fell upon our youthful hearts with every word which our parents spoke when instructing us in our faith and encouraging us to live rightly. Think too of all that you were told as children at school or in the Church, to encourage you to lead a virtuous life. Add to this the festivals of the Church, the good example of many of her children, the lives of her saints, and the countless good books which place the beauty of virtue before your eyes! All this is seed which falls ever anew upon the hearts of the children of the Church. So, too, all that we hear from the mouth of the priest in the pulpit, the very words I address to you now, are good seeds falling into the hearts of those who listen.

Moreover, all the inspirations of grace are greatly increased if we walk prayerfully in the presence of the Lord, and are zealous in receiving holy Communion.

How abundant would our spiritual harvest be, were we to receive into our hearts the seed that falls upon it, and by our co-operation aid it to grow and ripen! Call to mind what doctors in theology tell us, that for each grace well applied, the Lord bestows a still greater one. It is, however, necessary to take care lest there be mixed with the good seed which falls into our hearts some of the bad seed which Satan is constantly endeavoring to sow. As regards the outer world, he is anxious to prevail upon us to esteem and seek inordinately the enjoyment of temporal good, and instead of praising, glorifying, and loving with all our hearts the Creator, to offend Him by misusing His gifts even to idolatry. Oh! how many weeds sprout up in the garden of our heart through this misuse, and how great the danger which menaces man, if he be not careful to root out the weed of inordinate love for creatures, lest it stifle the good seed and overgrow the ground of his heart!

I have said before that every word which was addressed to us in our youth, and which instructed us in our faith, was a good seed dropped into our hearts. Satan knows this, and tries to prevent the sowing of these seeds. He endeavors to create obstacles which will prevent parents from fulfilling their duties, so that the children grow up without instruction or the habit of prayer. He causes them to give scandal to their children by word and conduct, and thus sow the seed of evil. It is a subject for wonder that sometimes children are better and more pious than their parents.

School is the place where youth ought to be instructed in their religion, and trained to walk in the way of virtue; it is next to the family circle the place where the good seed ought to be sown most abundantly and fostered most carefully; and yet school is not unfrequently the most active field of Satan for the sowing of evil. Children are sent to godless schools, where they imbibe the spirit of the world, where, hearing our holy religion abused, and coming in contact with children of depraved morals, they take into their hearts seeds of immorality and irreligion.

In a short time the youth that have been under such influences avoid the church, and feel disgust at prayer and the word of God. They prefer to hear the frivolous conversation of children of the world and frequent their society; they read no longer good books, but peruse such as are filled with vain and worldly tales, perhaps even with immorality. Alas, what a vast amount of evil seeds falls into such hearts! And who is there to eradicate the tares? Those whose duty it is are careless, asleep. Satan has plenty of time to tend and water the sprouting tares.

As Christ says in to-day's Gospel, while the husbandman is sleeping the enemy comes and sows cockle. Sleep is the emblem of carelessness, and how fraught with danger is this our sleep for those whom God has placed under our guidance!

Why is it that so many children, instead of progressing in virtue, grow in frivolity and wickedness? The carelessness of the parents is the cause. They

sleep, fulfill not their duty, and the enemy cometh; they do not keep watch over the conduct of their children, and Satan enrolls them as his own.

Therefore if we earnestly desire to exclude from our hearts the seeds of evil, and to stifle the germ of sin within us, we must watch, and while rooting out the tares of evil, cherish and watch over the seed that produces the harvest which the hands of angels will one day collect for the granaries of heaven! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Suffer both to grow until the harvest."—Matt. 13.

THE question which the reapers and servants addressed to their master in to-day's Gospel seems quite natural; for as their master had sown only good seed in his field, they had reason to be astonished that weeds sprang up which threatened to choke the wheat. Their question: "Wilt thou that we go and gather it up," appears praiseworthy; they were anxious to undo the evil that had crept in. Their master refused the request; and why? The spiritual meaning of this parable supplies the answer, and hence I say: *Now* God *tolerates*, but *one day* He will *separate*.

God suffers the wicked to live unpunished among the good, and He allows this in consequence of His infinite wisdom and justice. Let us consider our reasons for this assertion.

O Mary, thou wise Virgin, as the Church salutes thee, pray for us that we may obtain the grace to recognize the ways of God, and to glorify for evermore His wisdom and justice!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

If we consider how and why God created man, how much He has done to induce him to serve and love his

Creator and be saved; if consulting history and past experience we see how man, instead of living a holy life seems only to exist for the purpose of offending God, and if furthermore we reflect that God allows this to continue for thousands of years, we must be astonished!

Faith, however, enlightens and teaches us that God created man free and to His own likeness; that He put him upon this earth as in a place where he has by his own life to determine his future eternity.

When through the fall of Adam we lost heaven and our supernatural destination, God did for us what of ourselves we could never have been able to do. The Son of God became man, and paid the price of our Redemption. But as man's first fall into sin did not deprive him of freedom, he was obliged on his part to do all that the grace of God enabled him to do. He was required to make, by a voluntary co-operation, the merits of the Redemption his own. God as the Creator of nature as well as of grace did not wish to disturb the natural order of things, and He willed that the kingdom of God upon earth should be extended among men by men. He gave them the liberty to do this and thus increase their reward in heaven, or not to do it and then suffer in the world to come a deserved punishment.

Unfortunately, a great number of people do not accept the grace of Redemption, or, as I said before, they misuse it to offend God. Hence the tares in the great field of humanity. I say the Lord suffers this state of things, and in order to manifest His wisdom,

goodness and justice does not punish the wicked immediately. And how? St. Augustine answers this question when he says: "God is patient and suffers the sinner to remain among the good that he may be converted by their presence and example, and that the latter may be tried and sanctified through patience in persecution."

Hence God suffers the wicked to remain among the good principally for their own benefit, to lead them into the path of righteousness, since nothing strikes the sinner more than the contrast between wickedness, as he sees it in himself, and virtue, as reflected in the lives of the just. Besides, the example of others shows them that it is possible to lead a virtuous life, if they only choose to do so.

St. Augustine, reading one day before his conversion of the austere lives which St. Anthony and thousands of holy hermits led in the deserts of Egypt, said to himself: "If they could live thus, why can not I?" And if he was so miraculously converted to God by merely reading the lives of the saints, what would have been his feelings had he witnessed their holiness and lived among them!

Ask yourself husband, wife, father, mother, sister, brother, friend, does not the example of those around you, who lead a pious and virtuous life, constantly admonish you of your duty and incite you to live as they do?

This is even true of those sinners who refuse to hear a sermon or go into a church. The example of the

good and pious with whom they come in contact supplies the place of church and sermon. If they would only allow themselves to be influenced, they have sufficient inducement to be converted.

But supposing the wicked to be obstinately perverse in their evil ways while living among the good, I say, secondly, with St. Augustine, that God suffers their conduct in order that the good, under the guidance of Providence, may draw profit from it for their own salvation and augment their glory in heaven.

Think of the millions of martyrs who are now in heaven. Had God not permitted Nero, Antiochus, and the other persecutors of the just to live and pass their days in cruelty, we would have no countless throng of martyrs, nor would these have gained the glory which they now enjoy in heaven.

And even if we are not persecuted by the wicked unto the shedding of our blood, there is the unbloody martyrdom of patient endurance, which we undergo by having to endure their company and bear with their contumely.

You know this well, pious wife of a godless husband, and you, pious husband of a wicked wife, and you too parents, children, servants, masters and neighbors. Under such circumstances how many occasions have we to practice patience, humility, confidence in God, to call faith, hope and charity into action? We can say with St. Francis of Sales: "It is the wicked, our enemies, who work most diligently to adorn our heavenly crowns."

We read in the life of St. Ludwina, who was bed-ridden thirty-eight years, that one day longing to die and be with Christ she saw an angel who said to her: "Thy crown is not yet ready." Soon after a band of wicked people invaded her room, and calling her an imposter dragged her out of bed and beat her. Then the angel reappeared and said: "Ludwina, thy crown is finished; enter into the joys of heaven," whereupon she expired.

I say thirdly: God suffers to remain among the good even those who, He knows, will never be converted. And why? To glorify through them His justice. The wicked often possess some good qualities: They care for their families, are kind to the poor and perform other good deeds. God rewards them here upon earth by bestowing upon them temporal wealth. One day He will come and separate the good from the bad, and the wicked, having had their reward in this world, can expect only everlasting pains in the flames of hell.

But some one asks: Are the good not in danger of being corrupted by companionship with the wicked? Yes and no. *Yes*, if they do not avoid and flee temptation. *No*, if they shun evil and profit by the grace which God gives them to conquer sin and enhance by their victories the luster of their crown in heaven. Christ said: No one is able to take from Me the sheep which my Father gave Me. Therefore, by allowing the wicked to remain among the just, God glorifies His wisdom, goodness, patience and fidelity.

I shall use a comparison and conclude. God's Provi-

dence in the salvation of souls may be likened to a magnificent carpet whose beauty and richness we are not now permitted to see fully. But it will be exposed to the view of all on the last day, when the fineness and intricacy of its texture, the wonderful harmony of its colors, will strike the wicked with fear and fill the good with joy. In this world we see the wrong side of this divinely woven carpet with its confused, torn threads and dark stripes. When, however, on the last day the ways of eternal wisdom are unfolded to us, then we shall see how all combine to the glory of God and the good of His saints; and then we shall be separated from the company of the wicked forever! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn."—Matt. 13.

DURING our short stay in this world the just and the wicked are mingled together. God who tolerates the wicked has in His Wisdom so ordained for the welfare of both, provided they make use of the graces which are connected with this decree of His Providence. God now endures this dwelling together, but one day He will separate and judge. But too often the companionship of the good becomes a burden and a reproach to the wicked, an obstacle in their path of evil, as the Holy Ghost testifies in the Book of Wisdom. They often use violent means to free themselves from the just, at times not even stopping short of murder. But we say to them quietly:

Why this haste? Soon we shall be separated for ever. Then you will weep and lament, but it will be too late. Now is the time to choose;—to the right, or to the left.

O Mary, thou who didst stand with the evil doers beneath the cross, and who art now in Heaven with all saints, pray for us that we may one day go to Thee, and remain with Thee for evermore!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Jesus admonishes us, saying: Judge not by appear-

ances; judge not hastily! This is an especial warning not to judge man's real condition from appearances here below. In man's narrow view the sinner seems to have the advantage and to enjoy greater privileges than the true Christian.

But things will have a different aspect when God will make a division, sending forth His angels with the command: separate the good from the bad; place those on the right—these on the left.

Upon earth pride seems to be an earnest of success. The ambitious man finds his way to glory and distinction; he is exalted among his fellow-mortals, perhaps places on his head the crown that in right belongs to a just man. The humble occupy the lowest seats, as if these were their due.

But in how different a light will both appear when the Lord will come to judge, and when the angels will separate and say: "The humble to the right; the proud to the left!"

The humble, then exalted in proportion as they lowered themselves, will shine in the glorious light of all their good deeds, while the proud will stand on the left covered with shame. Their cry then will be: "Ye mountains fall upon us, and ye hills cover us!"

In this life the rich seem to prosper, even though they crush the righteous poor, defraud them of their earnings and otherwise wrong them.

When the angels, God's appointed reapers appear, they will say: "The patient poor to the right!" Then will the jewels of merit, which they earned by uniting

their will with the most holy will of God, shine in all their beauty. To the rich sinner, however, will be said: "To the left!" Upon earth his sole thought was to accumulate perishable treasures, his idol was gold. His life said for him: Gold, thou art my god! Of thee I think always; thou art the object of my solicitude! For thy sake I neglect my prayers, mass, spiritual readings, confession and holy Communion; thy loss alarms me more than the loss of my soul!—Behold him on the last day in the poverty and nakedness of the demons.

On earth, the wicked often rejoice over the success of their evil deeds, while the just mourn their sins and the sins of others.

But how will it be when the Lord sends His reapers? Then will be said: Blessed are they that mourn and weep, their sorrow shall be turned into joy—and those who have sowed in tears shall reap in gladness. All these to the right!

To those who on earth made no account of sin, who laughed and frolicked and danced, will come the word: To the left—prepare for that place where through all eternity the lamentations of woe, the cries of despair will resound. It will be said to them: In proportion to your delight while on earth in sinful pleasures, you must now endure pain in the flames of eternal fire!

On this earth there is joy among those who turn every thing to their own selfish ends, forgetful of the welfare of their fellow-men, who, instead of loving others as themselves, doing unto others what they wish others to do unto them, remain cold and unmoved at

the sight of human misery, and give no thought to corporal or spiritual works of mercy.

But the reapers will come to make a division. To the left! they will say to all these nominal Christians, to egotists, to all that paid less attention to the alleviation of want than the heathen.

But on the right will stand those to whom the words of Christ apply: I was naked and you clothed me; I was hungry and you gave me food; I was sick and you visited me.

Especially great will be the reward of the just who have led others upon the path of justice. Happy those, who by their example, their exhortations, have edified those around them, by their piety prevented them from doing evil, and encouraged them to do good! Happy those who, not satisfied with influencing their own families, endeavor to win all sinners from their wicked ways, and to bring the unbelieving and irreligious within the pale of the Catholic Church. A gracious sentence from the divine Judge awaits them. To these will be said: Enter into the kingdom of eternal reward with Me and with all the souls saved by your zeal!

But woe to those who give scandal, an evil of which every sinner is more or less guilty. To them will be said: These to the left, together with the souls they corrupted Bind a millstone around their necks, nay, not one but as many as the times they have given scandal during their life. How deep these will be drawn into the abyss of hell!

But my sermon would be too long were I to consider

all the different lights in which this question can be viewed. I shall only add:

When the reapers have fulfilled the Lord's command, Christ will say: "Bind the cockle into bundles!" In the same manner He speaks elsewhere of the sheaves of wheat.

What does this binding signify? It is an admonition that the sinner on the day of Judgment must not only render an account for the evil he himself performed but also for the sins which others, seduced by his example, committed.

Who can enumerate the sins which you have caused others to commit by your pride, avarice, envy, intemperance, unchastity, enmity? Who can count the number of souls you have scandalized and corrupted by your speech, your example and your sins of omission?

Ah! how many the bundles that the angel-reapers will bind together and cast into eternal fire!

The sin of one has often a most pernicious effect upon countless others, and exerts its influence on generations to come. An example of this we find in the heresiarchs who led whole nations astray.

The same can be said of the good, their actions remain; their labors produce fruit long after they quit the earth. From generation to generation, from land to land, the examples of the saints are transmitted and reproduced.

In regard to the just Christ will say: Bind into sheaves their meritorious thoughts, words, wishes,

works and suffering for the kingdom of God, that they may enjoy the reward of them all together. He will say unite the virtuous in special fellowship with those whom they led to heaven, that together they partake of eternal joy.

Let us ever bear in mind this separation which is to take place on the day of judgment; let us always remember the words; To the Right, or to the Left,—that now we may receive the grace, in virtue of which we will stand at the right hand of God with Christ and His saints on that great day when Light and Darkness shall be separated for ever! Amen!

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

FIRST SERMON.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed which a man took, and sowed in his field."—Matt. 13.

TO-DAY'S Gospel contains a most important admonition. It shows us clearly how we must carefully co-operate with divine grace, if it is to bear fruit within us, and how much depends on our considering nothing too small, nothing too trifling, which can assist us in furthering the kingdom of God. On the other hand, we must not think any thing too trivial which would prevent its growth or destroy it.

Man generally only deems such things worthy of his attention as are in themselves great and weighty, and yet experience constantly teaches the contrary, in the effects of nature as well as in those of grace. Therefore, take for your maxim in life:

Esteem nothing too little which can strengthen your life as a child of God, and regard nothing that can endanger it, as unimportant.

O Mary, full of grace, pray for us, that we may co-operate with every divine grace, be it ever so small, and that the kingdom of God may grow in strength within us, and suffer no harm!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The small grain of mustard-seed grows and, if well taken care of, becomes a tree. The growth of a tree, however, depends on several distinct conditions. The seed must be planted in suitable soil, it must feel the effects of the sun and of the air, it must take root and shoot upwards and spread; then only can we hope that the birds of the air will rest on the branches and there find shelter and rest.

Herein we find a powerful admonition in regard to our spiritual life as children of God and servants of the Most High.

We are what we are through the grace of God, and in this respect, one point, especially, is of the utmost importance. First the heart, in order to receive the seed of divine grace, must be fit to receive it. I speak of the seed of actual grace. This seed can never germinate except in a soul that is willing to do its share. Moreover, for the full development of the germ, namely, that it produce actions deserving a reward in heaven, it must grow in a soul that has been prepared by sanctifying grace; for we can never do any thing worthy of a celestial inheritance, unless we be children of God.

Further, a very important circumstance is this, that our sanctification frequently depends on the faithful use of those graces which in themselves appear trivial and of no consequence. A word that we read, a ser-

mon to which we listen, or an example given us by others, is often the beginning of an entire change of life, and thus not only influences our future stay upon earth, but will stretch far into eternity.

What remarkable instances of this are given us in the lives of the saints!

St. Anthony hears from the altar the words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go,—sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and follow me." Behold an apt illustration of the mustard-seed! St. Anthony hears this call of Christ. The seed falls into his heart. He leaves the world, goes into the desert of Egypt and becomes the patriarch of monks, those grand and heroic saints of the wilderness. How gigantic the tree which grew from this little seed; in the branches of that tree how many a bird found shelter and rest!

To St. Augustine came the call of grace with the words: "Take this and read!" He took the book which contained the lives of St. Anthony and his disciples, and the seed fell deep into the still sinful heart of Augustine, took root there, and grew into a mighty tree in whose branches the birds of the air found shelter and rest. The number of his followers became most numerous, and many eminent theologians taught by his works, have been instructors in the sanctuary of the Church.

John of God entered a church and heard the word of God. The seed fell into his heart, and produced a tree, the wide spreading branches of which shelter the birds of the air.

St. Francis Xavier was living a worldly life in Paris, when St. Ignatius said to him: "Xavier, what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" These words fell like seed into his heart, and, taking root there, produced a tree whose branches extend far and wide over Asia and Japan, and hundreds of thousands of human souls find rest and shelter beneath them, even to this day.

You servants and handmaids of the Lord, who are listening to me, ask yourself what was it that determined you to consecrate yourself entirely to God, and to live only for Him and His kingdom? Was it not a sermon, a book, an exhortation, a mission, a trial sent by God, a disappointed hope, or other circumstance, which you never would have thought capable of leading you from the path of destruction to that of salvation.

But to make the seed take root, it is necessary to have not merely a passing wish, but an earnest desire to live as God demands.

The tender plant must lift itself above the ground, and grow, warmed by the light of the sun and nourished by air and rain. This means that we must watch and foster within us the workings of grace; we must walk in the sunlight of faith, and through our prayers and communings with God become filled with the desire to live for heaven, that the birds of the air,—that is, the good intentions awakened by this desire,—may find shelter and rest in our hearts. If we live in this disposition, all will be well with us, the tree of virtue

will grow within us and we will enjoy its numberless blessings.

On the other hand, we can also say that the tree of vice, whose beginning is small but whose growth is sure, resembles a mustard-seed. Man is not all at once inclined to evil. No—the seed generally falls lightly and imperceptibly into the heart, sometimes by means of a sinful word, a dangerous book, or bad example. The poisonous plant takes root and grows. We pay no attention to it, and neglect to weed it out. It gains strength by our giving way to temptations, and, stretching out its various branches, ruins countless souls by its corrupting influence. Therefore we must not only be careful to accept and make use of every divine grace, however small it may be, but searching continually our conscience, we must also uproot whatever sin is implanted in our hearts, in order to prevent it from growing into a tree which we will be unable to uproot, but will be obliged to fell with the ax of penance, a task for which the sinner has seldom either the strength or the courage.

Therefore, let our rule of conduct be, never to regard as of little consequence any thing which concerns our life as children of God, nor count as trifling any thing that may endanger our soul. Thus thought and thus lived, according to St. Basil, the great saints of God. It was this that made them giant trees of virtue in the kingdom of Christ!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."—Matt. 13.

IF the holy faith to which we have been called shall aid us in gaining salvation, then we must live in accordance with its dictates and allow its truths to influence the principal powers of our soul, namely, reason, the affections and the will. Hence I maintain:

If the powers of the soul, reason, heart and will are to be so strengthened that we may be enabled to live upon earth as true children of God, then they must be thoroughly penetrated with faith, just as flour is penetrated by the leaven and converted by it into tasteful bread.

O Mary, thou who didst believe and thus didst become a Mirror of Justice during thy stay upon earth, pray for us that holy faith may in like manner penetrate our souls and our whole life!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Faith penetrating our soul gives light to the *mind*. It is the first thing necessary in aiding man to lead a life pleasing to God. To this purpose not only must faith enlighten the mind, but it must, so to say, penetrate it, that is, it must influence our very thoughts and wishes. We must keep before our eyes the aim and end for which God created us, and ever bear in mind all that

He demands of us if we would make progress upon the path of salvation, and at last in the joys of eternal life reach the goal, which is God Himself.

It is true that he who has the happiness of possessing virtuous and Catholic parents learns while a child the commandments of God and of His Church, and all that He has done to save mankind. But alas! this faith, this knowledge acquired in early youth, often influences but little after life. The reason of this is, that such knowledge is merely superficial, that it is merely a work of memory; it does not penetrate the soul, as leaven does the flour.

That our soul may be thoroughly illumined with the light of faith, we must think of its teachings not only during time of prayer and while in church, but at all times and in all places must we look at the things of this world by its holy light, and regard them only as means for enabling us to serve God and do His holy will. Hence it is our duty to take the utmost pains to recognize our vocation; and when this is accomplished, to try and discover what are the opportunities which it affords us to glorify God by good deeds in the fulfillment of our duties and in the salvation of souls.

This will become clear to us if we study the common tenor of our lives here on earth, and at the same time notice the feelings of our *heart*.

As every one knows, our life is passed in *work*, *cares*, *suffering* and *joy*. To be penetrated with the Holy Spirit as flour is with leaven does not mean only to confess with the lips the truths of faith, but also to mani-

fest them in our actions. It means to work for something better than temporal goods, and to think of something higher than the desire of bequeathing to our children a rich heritage to enable them to take a high position in the world. In this manner the heathens live and act. Christians who thus live look upon life in the light of the children of the world, who regard wealth, honor, and enjoyment as having intrinsic value, and who devote all their energies to procure them for their families and for themselves.

Have we not reason to marvel when we see children of the Church, whose lips profess all that our holy faith teaches of the aim and end of man, and of the twofold eternity, who protest even their readiness to shed their blood for the faith—is it not, I say, a subject of wonder to see these children of the Church as covetous and as sensual as the irreligious and the heathen?

What is the reason of this? It is because faith does not penetrate their souls as leaven does the flour. It dwells upon the lips and influences not their lives, their wishes or their actions.

I have just remarked that our lives are passed in cares, joys, and sorrows. If from these we expect to draw profit for a future life, our cares must be borne as holy faith teaches us, with entire trust in God. Sorrow must be accepted as coming from His hand, and patiently endured for His glory; and in the same spirit must we accept our joys.

We should be so penetrated with the light of faith as to be able to proclaim with truth before God and

man, that wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honor or ignominy, a long life or a short one, are indifferent to us provided we serve God and save our soul. But few children of the Church think or act in this manner; faith does not penetrate their reason.

Such should be the sentiments of our heart were it imbued with holy faith.

It is by no means sufficient to believe that Christ redeemed us by His death upon the cross; that He exhorted us to follow in His footsteps, and that there is no other way to follow Him, save the way of the cross! These truths must penetrate our hearts and minds.

And as regards the happiness of this life, though the curse of sin has changed the paradise of earth into a vale of tears, there are yet left many innocent joys to refresh man's heart. But if we would enjoy ourselves in the proper manner, and gain merit for heaven, we must ever remember the words of the Apostle: "Rejoice, rejoice at all times, but in the Lord!" This the Christian does when, instead of imitating the heathen and thinking only of sinful gratifications and passing pleasures, he seeks after those innocent and holy joys which relate to God and to his union with Him in the life to come.

Lastly, faith must also penetrate and leaven our *will*. To effect this we must not only recognize and believe that our sanctification is the will of God, we must also actively co-operate in its fulfillment. To this end we must adopt good resolutions and keep them faithfully and inviolably.

Faith must penetrate our minds and strengthen us to open our hearts to the Lord, in order that we may receive not only a few graces from on high, but all those which God from eternity destined for our salvation. May we use them faithfully, and say with St. Paul: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me."

Lord, I believe, but increase Thou my faith, that it may penetrate all the faculties of my soul, and make me live according to Thy holy will!

Thus let us pray with real fervor of soul and correspond with the graces that this petition brings us; then shall we be an honor to the Church and faithful disciples of Christ! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"The kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and laid in three measures of meal."—Matt. 13.

THE mustard seed, of which the Lord speaks in to-day's Gospel, and also the leaven which, when mixed with the meal, works unseen, are a figure of the many and powerful graces that come to us from the hidden life of Christ.

Certainly the whole life of our Lord and every word with which He instructed mankind are replete with graces for our sanctification.

But there are three mysteries especially, where the power of grace is most wonderful, but where, too, its workings are most concealed.

I allude to the Incarnation of the Lord, His hidden life in the most Holy Sacrament, and His death upon the cross.

Happy they who by meditating on these three mysteries of the Lord are penetrated with their spirit, for they will be animated with an eager desire to follow their Lord.

O Mary, thou who wast so united with thy Son in these three mysteries, and who wast sanctified by their influence, pray that we may be inspired with devotion towards them to the sanctification of our soul!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The great importance, in regard to our salvation, of meditating on the above three mysteries of the hidden life of Christ is clearly shown in the lives of the saints. They all had an especial devotion for these three mysteries which elicit with invincible power the adoration of the faithful.

The first mystery is that of the *Incarnation*, the mystery of the hidden union of the Son of God with our human nature, and of His birth.

Children are easily penetrated with the fervor of devotion which this mystery imparts. How they love to linger around the manger of their Lord!

The great benefit which grown persons derive from meditation on these holy mysteries, is the love and esteem of the virtue of humility.

What more forcible picture of humility can we have than the infinite majesty and perfection of God hidden under the form of a little child. Although the Incarnation of Christ is the reflection of all the other virtues of the divine Heart, yet it teaches us in a special manner humility. St. Paul says of Christ: "Being in the form of God, He debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, and in shape found as man."

There is nothing of more consequence in our spiritual life than genuine humility. Without humility virtue has no foundation; without humility there is no increase of divine grace, no growth in holiness; without humility our salvation is constantly in danger.

If by practising virtue and following Jesus we hope to work out our salvation, humility must breathe in every

aspiration of our soul, and penetrate our thoughts, desires and actions. What would it profit us, if, while apparently distinguishing ourselves by our virtue and good works, the worm of pride were secretly gnawing at their core? Such works would be worthless in the eyes of God. Instead of choice fruit, they turn out to be vile husks.

Our humility, further, must not be satisfied with eliciting a few acts; it must penetrate all our doings, and leaven our whole being.

The mystery of the hidden presence of Christ in the *Most Holy Sacrament* refers to a no less important disposition of the heart.

Not only does the hidden sacramental life of Christ recommend most emphatically this same virtue of humility, but it admonishes us also to sanctify our inner life by prayer, which we ought to practise so constantly and esteem so highly, that from a mere duty it passes to a real need of the soul, just as breathing is a need of the body. Further, we must pray in such a manner that our soul in reality ascends to the Almighty, resting in communion with Him, and uniting us to Him. This was the case with the saints, who by their union with God tasted here upon earth the joys of heaven.

This union with God is especially promoted by familiar, loving intercourse with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The Church herself in her acts of thanksgiving at the Mass in honor of the Most Holy Sacrament refers to this effect of a worthy Communion when she prays: "Let us, O God, share in the eternal fruition

of Thy Divine Majesty, as is foreshadowed here upon earth by the reception of the Holy Eucharist." Happy the soul that is conscious to itself of only living here on earth to be in the company of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament! She becomes the abode of Christ, and can exultingly exclaim with St. Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

As food gives strength and life to the body, so the Most Holy Sacrament, the Manna of Heaven, is intended to strengthen our soul.

The third mystery in which the divinity of Christ is entirely hidden is the mystery of His *passion* on the cross, when He cried out: "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The suffering of Christ upon the cross was not really necessary for our Redemption; for, one word spoken in our behalf, while He was yet in the womb of His Blessed Mother, would have been abundantly sufficient. He suffered in order to show His love for us and to give us an example, to induce us, for love to Him, to suffer unto death all that Providence may send us in order to test our fidelity. To impress upon us this truth, and to remind us that we, the children of the Church militant upon earth, will celebrate one day her triumphs in heaven, Christ insists with such solemn emphasis: Those who will follow Me, must carry their cross daily. Yes, not only carry it daily, but hourly, so that love of the cross may penetrate and leaven our whole soul, all our actions, our entire life; that just as the children of the world desire only tem-

poral well-being, we, as followers of Christ, place ourselves as children in His fatherly arms and find consolation in showing Him by our patience and resignation in suffering the greatness of our faith, hope and love, and our desire to follow our crucified Lord upon the way of salvation. Accordingly there is here a likeness between the order of nature and of grace. God as the Creator of the universe hides Himself; we do not see Him, but the workings and forces of nature manifest His presence, power and majesty. Just so Christ, as the source of divine grace, is hidden in the kingdom of the Church. But the dispensations and effects of the graces which He bestows prove His presence, His power and His love. The saints lived and worked after His example. The full greatness of their deeds is still hidden, and will not be revealed until the day of judgment.

Blessed those who are penetrated with the hidden grace of the three grand mysteries of Christ; the miracles of divine love will be revealed in them by their ever-increasing zeal to follow in the footprints of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ! Amen!

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

"Is thy eye evil, because I am good?"—Matt. 20.

JESUS asks the discontented laborers: "Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" Why do they murmur? Have they been obliged to exceed the stipulated amount of labor? No! Have they worked longer than the time specified? No! Has not the master promptly paid them? Yes! Did he give them less than he promised? No! What then is the cause of their discontent? It is envy, because those who were sent later into the vineyard to work, received the same wages.

Envy is a most dangerous, execrable yet concealed vice; a vice of which many are guilty, but whose real wickedness few recognize.

Let us employ this hour in considering its dangers.

O Mary, mother of love, pray for us, that the pestilential breath of this sin may never pollute our soul! I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

We can better recognize the turpitude and wickedness of envy, by considering the beauty, merit and

amiable qualities of the opposite virtue—true, heroic brotherly love.

The love of our neighbor for the love of God is a virtue which inspires us to love others as ourselves, to wish them all the good we wish ourselves, and to do for them all that we would do for our own interests. Of this commandment Christ says: "It is like unto the other," namely: to the commandment of loving God, and our salvation depends on our observance of it. Thus teach Christ and His Apostles, especially St. Paul and St. John, both of whom emphatically and frequently insist upon it.

Envy is the vice directly opposed to this commandment. This will become clear to us if we consider the teachings of St. Paul in regard to the qualities of true, active, brotherly love. "Charity," says he, "is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth: beareth all things, believeth all things" (1 Cor. 13, 4).

Let us reverse these qualities, and we have the most perfect picture of envy.

Envy is not kind; on the contrary, it is cruel, selfish, and without compassion for the needs and sufferings of others.

Envy provokes to anger, and leaves nothing untried to prevent the well-being of others. Envy seeks only its own good, and is arrogant. It thinks and does evil.

Who can count all the vices whose source is envy? Jealousy, mistrust, calumny, deceit, enmity! Envy is easily roused to anger, and brooks little contradiction. It rejoices not at the good fortune of others, but is pleased, rather, at the contrary.

Oh, how *terrible* a vice! it tears up by the very roots, the beautiful flower of brotherly love!

I say, secondly, what a *foolish* vice! For it deserves also this stigma. Every sin bears the mark of insanity, and therefore it is that Holy Writ calls the sinner a fool It were easy to point out the characteristics of insanity in the misdeeds of sinners, especially in the envious

Envy deprives man of the use of his reason, robs him of strength of mind, and exerts an evil influence on his other faculties. The possessions of his neighbor seem better than his own, for no other reason than that another and not he is the owner!

Besides, he who is guilty of other sins has at least some satisfaction: the proud when he is honored; the miser when he counts his money and fills his coffers; the intemperate while he eats and drinks, and so of others The envious have only the satisfaction of their anger.

Foolish vice! It harms itself while yielding to its own indulgence! What a foolish, but at the same time, what a *dangerous* vice!

It was envy that brought sin among the angels. Lucifer and his adherents, as the Fathers of the Church teach us, envied the glory of Christ, Who in His hu-

man nature stood below them, but Whom they were commanded to glorify and worship on account of the hypostatic union with the person of the Son of God.

As regards man, Holy Writ teaches us that it was through the envy of Satan that sin entered paradise. The envy of the serpent would deprive the human race not only of paradise but also of heaven. It has cast upon us innumerable woes, and has exposed us to countless dangers in working out the salvation of our soul. Satan envied mankind who were destined to take the place of the fallen angels in heaven.

Woe to us if we ever hearken to the voice of envy! Satan will then find it easy to assail us with temptations of all kinds!

The first born of men became a murderer on account of envy. It was envy that induced Cain to kill Abel. It was envy that nailed the Redeemer of mankind to the cross.

It is true that pride introduced heresy into the world, and thus corrupted countless souls and wrought their eternal ruin; but envy is the twin-brother of pride, the second poisonous fang of the serpent of hell. Not seldom has its influence been felt since the origin and dissemination of heresy, especially since the last and most pernicious of all, namely, Protestantism.

Pride mated with envy has given birth in our own day to the heresy whose followers style themselves the Old Catholics.

Yet more lamentable is the fact that envy, even among the good, has succeeded in preventing much

that otherwise would have been done for the salvation of souls and the welfare of the Church, thus effecting incalculable mischief in every age of the Christian era.

It is envy that lights the torch of war among nations, and destroys the peace and happiness of congregations and home circles. Were there no envy among mortals earth would become a paradise. Envy were capable of changing even heaven into a place of torment, and for this reason it is, as Gregory the Great says, "The mark of the damned."

The condition of the envious is the more dangerous, because the poison of envy is concealed.

How few think themselves guilty of this sin! how few accuse themselves of it, and endeavor to uproot it from their hearts with the determination of St. Francis of Sales, who says: "Did I know that a fibre of envy were beating in my heart, I would tear it out!"

Follow his example, cost what it may, and instead of that detestable parasite, guard deep within your heart the holy virtue of heroic brotherly love!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."—Matt. 20.

HOW serious are the words of Christ with which to-day's Gospel closes: "Many are called, but few are chosen." What is the meaning of the word *many?* It signifies all men, who certainly are many. Yes, by the goodness of God, all are called to be saved; for the Lord created man in order that he might remain faithful to Him, and win eternal life.

How inexcusable if we are lost, who belong to the true Church, in whose keeping God has left so many means to aid us in working out our salvation!

Our destruction is the more to be pitied as the divine graces bestowed upon us become, through our own fault, the millstones which drag us deeper and deeper into the abyss of hell!

Let us meditate on this subject to-day.

O Mary, Mother of Holy Hope, save us thy children, and pray that God may grant us the grace of a firm resolve to work out our salvation!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

That man was created for God, and in God's own likeness, our holy faith teaches. This fact our reason will readily acknowledge if we reflect, as I said once before, upon the great and communicative goodness of God.

God wills. He calls back to Him each human soul that has been turned away, as all of us have been, from its supernatural destination. This will, this call of God, has become evident to the entire human race, by the Incarnation of His Son, Who came, as He Himself assures us, to seek that which was lost. He not only appeared among us and personally taught us the truth, but from the beginning of the world He has sent us His messengers to exhort us in His name to walk in the path of salvation, and thus will He continue to do till the end of time. For this purpose He founded His holy Church, and empowered her to preach with infallible truth the words of salvation, and communicate to her children those divine graces which He left her for the benefit of mankind.

Not only has He called mankind in general, but to each individual child of the Church He has extended an especial and emphatic call; and great will be our fault, both in His eyes and in our own, if we fail to gain eternal life.

The call of God reached us in our youth, if we had the happiness of possessing virtuous parents and were educated in Catholic schools. We hear this call of God especially in the instructions which we receive from His ministers, in the inner inspirations and impulses of the divine graces which He imparts to us, in all those means of salvation at our disposal, such as the holy Mass, the festivals of the Church, the Sacraments, the different occasions offered us for doing good and practising the virtues of our station in life,

the reading of good books—especially the lives of the saints, and the example of the pious.

How many voices are continually calling to us: Serve your God! save your soul! God calls!

Is not a sermon an exhortation from God to Christian souls? Thus I to-day say to you in the name of God: Serve your Lord; give thanks to Him for the blessing of faith; give thanks to Him that you were born of Christian parents; instruct yourselves thoroughly in the Catholic faith; pray morning and evening; walk ever in the presence of the Almighty; flee sin, and may God forbid that you ever remain a single day in the state of mortal sin; repent, confess, avoid every occasion of doing evil, resist temptation promptly; assist daily, if possible, at Mass, visit the Blessed Sacrament, and receive it often, and always more and more worthily.

Children of the Church, do you recognize in how many ways God calls you to walk in the path of righteousness and thus win salvation?

But how many, unhappily, instead of heeding the admonitions of pious parents disregard them, and even despise them! Instead of profiting by religious instruction, how many children neglect it altogether or pay but little attention to it! How soon are their young hearts filled with the pernicious principles of the world! How quick they are to neglect their prayers, Mass and the Sacraments! They no longer hear a sermon, and instead of pious books, they read every thing calculated to pervert their youthful minds, imitating, in a word,

the example of those who think not of God, and who live only for the perishable goods of this world. If God admonishes and calls them by the stings of conscience, they heed not its reproaches. They drown the interior voice of God, defer their conversion, and are lost through their own fault.

As to those who possess not the true faith, the day of judgment will reveal the many ways in which God called them to recognize His holy will, to avoid sin, and to do good unto everlasting life.

Of those outside the Church, many are born of heretical parents, and are in error without any fault of their own; being rightly baptized, they are only outwardly separated from the Church of Christ. These understand Holy Writ as others explain it to them, or in the light of their own limited intelligence, and these the Lord calls through His written Word to avoid sin, practise virtue, repent, and trust in Christ. These are the voices through which God calls them in order to be saved.

Those, however, who willfully err will be punished accordingly, and they will have only themselves to reproach if they lose eternal life.

As to the heathens, who never had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel of Christ, we need only reflect on those interior and exterior voices which call out to every soul on reaching the years of discretion: Serve your God according to the dictates of your conscience, guided by the unwritten laws of nature.

All creatures, infinite in number, are like so many

tongues calling upon the heart of the heathen: We did not make ourselves, but we were created by One who is both your God and ours; serve Him!

And thus too does conscience admonish every reasonable being in all his thoughts, words and actions: Avoid evil; do good!

If he listens to this voice, the hand of God will lead him upon the path of salvation. Either while still in the enjoyment of life and health, or at his dying hour, the mercy of God, by a miracle of grace, will unite him to the soul of the Church, and he will be saved.

A fact to which I particularly desire to draw your attention, and which I want to be clear to all is: That if children of the Church are lost it is not God who willed it, but they themselves by not following His call. Examine yourselves, and reflect upon the many voices which have spoken to you of your duties as a child of God. The Lord has called you, and you can not deny it. Had you listened to His voice, you not only would have no reason to doubt your salvation, but you would be a saint to-day. If you are lost it will not be God's fault, but your own; and your fate in eternity will merit a darker despair than that of the irreligious and the unbeliever. You have still time; follow from this moment the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and, on the last day, as a child of the triumphant Church, you will rejoice with the elect for evermore! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Why stand you here all the day idle?"—Matt. 20.

THE reproach which Christ in to-day's Gospel addresses to those who remained idle until the eleventh hour, is unfortunately one which might be addressed to the greater portion of mankind, yes even to many of the children of the Church.

We usually live careless of eternity, seemingly forgetful why we are here upon earth, and that this life was not given us to seek the honors, joys and treasures of this world, but to gather merit for eternity. How many men, how many children even of the Church are idle in this regard!

Let us earnestly take to heart this reproach, at once so true, so important, so salutary for time and eternity, and endeavor to purchase back the hours we lost in idleness, and to employ with the zeal of the saints the days still left to us.

O Mary, thou faithful handmaid of the Lord, pray for us that, following thy example, we may employ our entire life in gaining our salvation through Jesus Christ our Redeemer!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Why stand you here all the day idle?" What an

astonishing, incomprehensible, and yet only too true fact! This becomes clear to us if we consider the character of our life upon earth, and the relation in which it stands to eternity.

Our life here below is the time which God gives us to prepare ourselves for the world to come.

If we reflect how precious time is, how short and how uncertain are the days of our life, we certainly would expect man to think of nothing else, than how to employ the days of his life in securely reaching that end for which life was given.

A crown, a high degree of glory, is the recompense for every moment well employed. St. Chrysostom was right when he exclaimed: "Time, thou art worth as much as God!" But time is so short; for what is the longest life compared to eternity? In addition to this, not one moment of this short time is certain. How often death surprises man, and then his precious time is gone, never to return. Man knows this, the Christian believes it; therefore how incomprehensible their neglect to employ their time after the zealous earnestness of the saints! This becomes still more incomprehensible, when we consider how provident man is of his time in regard to temporal affairs and the acquisition of earthly goods. They hesitate not to cross the ocean in the often disappointed hope of securing employment and gaining money, while, if they only seize the opportunity, they will never lack profitable labor in the grand affair of their salvation.

And yet how many lose and kill time!

I wish to call your attention to the following classes of idlers:

The first are those who lose their time from sheer *indolence*. They are those drones, who do their duty neither as citizens nor as Christians. They dream away their time, and awake when it is too late, to the grand reality of life. They want self-abnegation. These especially deserve the reproach: "Why stand you here idle?"

The second class are those who idle away their time by excessive labor, not for the salvation of their soul but through an inordinate care for the things of this world. I call them *industrious idlers*. Apparently they are occupied, but in reality they do nothing, since they are busy only for this fleeting world and not for eternity. They think themselves, however, much wiser than those who fail to accumulate an equal amount of temporal wealth. But all their labor, all their success is of no value towards their eternal welfare; indeed, as far as this is concerned they might better, perhaps, have remained as idle as the former. For, in their eagerness to gain temporal goods, they may have yielded to temptation and then, being in the state of sin, gained nothing even when they seemed to be laboring for heaven. These are the industrious idlers who, in the words of Holy Writ, exclaim when it is too late: "We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity" and of temporal care.

There are others who, though they live in the state of grace, may yet be said to lose the time which has

been granted to them to work out their salvation. To this third class of idlers belong those who lose their time in vain conversations and idle gossiping. Oh, how many apparently pious souls belong to this class of idlers! They talk ten, nay a hundred times too much. Even in necessary business how may useless words are spoken, how many moments wasted in idleness! Instead of leaving after having obtained the desired information, we remain and continue conversing about the same affair, though we previously stated all that was necessary; and in this manner we lose the time we should give to work.

But how shall we designate the many idlers who lose their time by too frequent visits and by prolonging this useless and sometimes dangerous pastime, till late in the night? Instead of regulating our visits by the just demands of friendship or of Christian neighborly love, we seek only to enjoy the society and conversation of others, forgetting that we could employ our time much better in sanctifying ourselves and others by works of charity.

Lastly, what shall we say of the idleness of pleasure-seekers, of those who pass day and night in gambling, dancing and other worldly amusements? How much time is lost for eternity in this manner! How much in visiting watering places, frequenting theatres and balls! There is also a certain class of people who lose their time in travelling for the sake of pleasure. I call these travelling idlers.

To all these we must needs add the large number

of *drunkards* who, in their revels, heed not quickly passing time, and employ it neither for their temporal nor spiritual welfare—who squander their money, impoverish their families and not unfrequently end their days in the almshouse. What a despicable class of idlers!

In conclusion, let me mention those who are idlers on account of negligence in renewing their good intention. The good we do, must be done with the right intention, that is, for God's sake and for His sake only.

Of course this does not mean that a Christian may not transact business or perform this or that work for the sake of gain, friendship or neighborly love, as our circumstances in life make necessary; only let these good and praiseworthy intentions be secondary to the one just mentioned.

Christian, lay your hand upon your heart and tell me, if you do not belong to one of these classes of idlers, or perhaps to all of them?

Make now the firm resolution of profiting well by the time yet left to you that, one day in the kingdom of eternal life, God may assign to you your reward! Amen!

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

"The seed is the word of God."—Luke 8.

EVERY Gospel which the Church reads or expounds to the faithful during the ecclesiastical year, points to a dogma or duty intimately connected with our life as children of the Church and of God. This is the case in to-day's Gospel, which contains a special admonition.

Christ speaks of hearing the divine Word. He refers to the fruit which it should, but unfortunately seldom does, produce.

Christ also explains the reasons and circumstances which prevent the word of God from exercising the desired influence upon the lives of the children of the Church.

Let us meditate to-day upon the explanations which the Lord himself gives us on this subject.

O Mary, thou who didst hear the Word of God as it should be heard, and who didst "keep that Word, pondering it in thy heart," grant that the same Word may also bear fruit in our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first cause which Christ assigns why the Word of God bears not fruit, is contained in the words: "Some fell by the wayside."

The trodden path represents the hearts of those who, despising the truths and laws of faith, pass their days in blindly following the example of others and in thinking only how they may render their lives as easy as possible. To this class belong not only numberless irreligious, but also many of the faithful who in their daily actions differ little from the irreligious.

Though, at times they hear the Word of God and at moments are conscious that their lives are not what faith demands, and though they frequently resolve to change their conduct, still the habit of a lax life has so grown upon them that the seed of the Word of God can not take root and will soon be trodden upon, owing to the wrong use they make of their lives, a use which, in the course of time, has become a second nature to them.

The example of others, too, prevents them from making promises of reformation or from keeping those which they may have made. They recognize during a sermon the necessity of caring above every thing else for their salvation, and of profiting by the graces which God bestows upon them; they harbor for the hour the most earnest resolve of changing their conduct and living as true Christians by attending for the future to

prayer, the hearing of Mass, the reading of good books, and the frequent reception of the holy Sacraments. And yet they never do so. The next day they neglect as usual their morning prayers, and proceed as heedless as ever to their work. And why? Because they have grown accustomed to this manner of life, and do as others with whom they dwell. They could conveniently hear Mass during the week, but do not. They are not in the habit of doing so, and others are negligent about it. They made the resolution to receive the blessed Sacrament every month but neglect to do as they resolved. Why? They are not in the habit of going so frequently to holy Communion, and others have not this habit.

Human considerations, fear of man, combine to keep them back and pluck, so to say, the seed of a holy life from their hearts. They fear the displeasure of man more than that of God. The seed of the divine Word bears not for them the fruit of eternal life.

"Some fell upon a rock and withered away." Herein lies the second cause which prevents the Word of God from bearing fruit within us. The stones with which our hearts are filled prevent it from taking root. And what stones are these? They are the different habitual sins, those sins and temptations to which man has become a slave, which he can not resist, and the inclination to which has, so to say, become petrified.

Pride, avarice, anger, envy, enmity, intemperance, unchastity, all become through habit impenetrable rocks to the Word of God.

It is true that even souls hardened in sin sometimes feel the influence of the divine Word which calls upon them to change their lives, and they resolve to follow the call; but the slightest temptation withers this frail blossom of an awakened conscience, and the seed of God's Word dies with it.

The third cause which prevents the seed of the divine Word from bearing fruit are the thorns which, as our Lord says, "growing up with the good seed, choked it." These thorns are our immoderate cares for earthly prosperity. The experiences of all ages of the world shows this to be the case. Men occupied with temporal cares heed not the warning of God's words, and forget that which should be their principal pursuit. These anxious people listen not to the warning of Christ: "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Their maxim seems to be: Of what use is heaven to me, if in caring for it I suffer temporal losses. They heed not the words of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God," but seem to say: Seek first happiness upon earth, we will gain heaven any way.

There is one circumstance in to-day's Gospel to which St. Gregory the Great refers when he says: Temporal goods may be compared to thorns. Children of men, you will not assent to this, but Christ himself has said so, and who dares to contradict Him? To you they seem rather a velvet lawn upon which you can rest, yet your own experience must teach you the truth of the words of Christ. Confess, do not thoughts of

how to win a fortune torment you day and night? And if you are in the possession of wealth, does not the fear that you may lose or employ it disadvantageously take away your rest? And lastly, how grieved you are when you lose it! You would give your share of heaven to regain it!

Ah! truly among temporal possessions there are thorns which stifle the seed of the divine Word.

Hence examine yourself earnestly and faithfully! Child of the Church, have you not contracted the habit of living, as most men do, after the example of the children of the world?

Are there no stones in your heart, no sins which have become habitual?

Do not temporal cares choke the growth of your good resolutions to lead an edifying life, and do not they lessen your anxiety to obtain all which may help you to it?

Remove from your heart this dust, these stones, these thorns; and, no doubt, the Word of the Lord will bring forth fruit for the Life to come thirty, sixty, nay a hundred-fold! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"But that which fell on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience."—Luke 8.

AS Christ Himself compares the Word of God to seed which brings forth fruit for eternal life, it becomes most important for us to meditate well on all that He has said, in order that we may derive the benefit from it to which He refers in the parable.

Most ardently do I desire that this be the case to-day; for what greater wish can a preacher have than that the Word which he proclaims may not be lost, but that it bear fruit; nay more, that it bear good fruit threefold, sixfold, a hundred-fold for the life to come.

Consider with me the causes on which, according to Christ's own testimony, the fructifying influence of the divine Word depends; then you will in future hear sermons with greater profit.

O Mary, thou whom the Lord calls blessed, because thou not only didst hear the Word of God, but also kept it in thy heart, that it might bring forth fruit, pray for us, that we, thy children, may follow in thy footsteps!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Those who bring forth fruit are they who hear the

Word of God with a good and perfect heart. And who are these? I answer: They are those of whom the angels at the birth of Christ sang: "Peace to men of good will." They are those who are really filled with the desire to hear the Word of God, to understand it and to benefit by it. But of how many can this be said? The majority hear the Word of God, but the soil of their hearts is not prepared to receive the seed; it is neglected, not tilled. They evince neither the spirit of Christian self-abnegation in receiving the divine Word, nor the willingness to act in accordance with its precepts at any cost.

They listen not to a sermon with the sincere desire of profiting by it and deriving the assistance necessary to change and sanctify their lives. They listen to it as coming from a human being, and are more desirous of hearing a well-ordered speech than of being impressed and improved.

Were it otherwise, how soon men would reap the benefit of the sermons which they hear! The instruction heard on Sunday would remain in the memory all week long, and with it the determination to keep the resolution then taken of leading a life pleasing to God.

A true cry of the heart is: O God, enlighten me, strengthen me, that Thy Word may not be lost upon me, and speak Thou Thyself to my inmost soul, Thou who searchest the heart and mind, in order that Thy Word may bring forth fruit for heaven!

Secondly, it is necessary that we should not only

hear the Word of God, but take it to heart, or as Christ says, that we should keep it, that is, meditate upon it and put it in practice. We must not be satisfied with merely receiving God's Word and taking no further notice of it, like a man who, according to St. James, looks into a mirror, and then goes away, presently forgetting what manner of man he is.

How many while listening to the Word of God feel in themselves the weaknesses which the preacher blames, or feel their obligation to serve God in earnest! Yet this impression lasts only during the sermon, and no sooner have they left the church than all is forgotten.

No! the seed must not remain on the surface; it must sink deep into the soil, take root, grow and bring forth fruit. That is to say, the Word of God must take root in our heart by the practical application of its teachings. How many are satisfied with merely understanding the meaning of a sermon or seizing the importance of the subject treated, without applying its lessons to their lives! They leave the church, and perhaps during the entire week never think once of what they heard. Hence the little fruit which accrues to them.

Thirdly, Christ admonishes us to bring forth fruit in patience.

What an important admonition! No doubt patience is an indispensable condition, that the seed of the divine Word may give life to our hearts.

"In patience," says the Lord, "you shall possess

your souls." The Holy Ghost assures us through St. James that: "Patience hath a perfect work."

Our life is a trial in this vale of tears. The parable in to-day's Gospel says so plainly. Cast your eyes upon a field, and observe the manner in which it is tilled. First, the husbandman scatters the seed, which quietly falls wherever he throws it. It lies upon the ground and is covered with earth, or perhaps is trodden into the soil. There it lies patiently until it decays. The new germ then bursts forth and lifts its head higher and higher until it is rocked by the winds of heaven; it is refreshed by the dew and the rain and the sunshine; it is beaten by storms and hail and snow; it suffers all and grows on, bearing in time blossoms and fruit, and bending at last its head under the weight of its own product. Then it is cut, threshed and ground, and serves as nourishment to man and beast.

What a beautiful symbol of patience—a virtue so necessary for the soul in which the seed of the divine Word shall fructify!

There are two more virtues whose influence is necessary, and these two are humility and unceasing thought of heaven. They give us strength to bring forth fruit in patience for eternal life.

In regard to the humility with which we should hear the Word of God, I need only remark that if we wish it to bear fruit for the salvation of our soul, the more humble we are the greater will be our desire to be instructed in sermons. The proud do not feel the

need of instruction; they think they possess sufficient knowledge.

The more humble a Christian is, the less danger there is of his receiving the Word of God as though it were only the word of man. The humble hearer does not criticise the delivery of a sermon, and still less does he apply it to others instead of to himself.

Of not less importance is the second virtue of which I spoke, namely, the constant remembrance of heaven. Without doubt, the thought of the inexpressible reward that is prepared for those who have served God faithfully in this world, acts as a powerful stimulus in the practise of virtue. It not only gives us courage to do violence to ourselves, but makes this violence unnecessary by infusing into our hearts a holy eagerness to reach our blessed home.

Oh, were we thoroughly humble and had heaven continually before the eyes of our mind, then indeed the seed of the divine Word would be like unto the manna which fell from heaven in the wilderness, and would nourish us in this desert of life, and bear abundant fruit for eternity!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And other some fell upon good ground: and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundred-fold."—Luke 8.

"NOT I—without divine grace, and not divine grace without me, but I with divine grace," thus speaks St. Bernard, paraphrasing the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

We find in these words the cause why the divine Word does not bear fruit in all children of the Church in the same proportion. The principal reason lies in the different degrees of co-operation. Jesus points most distinctly to this difference in another place, when He speaks of the seed which yielded fruit thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold.

What is meant by thirty, sixty, or a hundred-fold?

Let me explain this to you to-day. Listen to me attentively, reflect with me and you will understand our Lord's meaning.

O Mary, thou who didst willingly receive and faithfully guard, as no other mortal did, the Word of God, pray for us, that we may receive divine grace to follow thy example in hearing the Word of God and keeping it!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

And the seed bore fruit *thirty-fold.* What hearers

of the divine Word are meant by those in whom the seed produced fruit *thirty-fold?* Who are they in whom it produced sixty, and who are they who gained a hundred fold? We will readily understand this if we consider the meaning of Christian justice, and if we reflect on the different states or conditions in which the soul of man may be constituted.

First, then, we have souls who are in the state of disgrace, either because they voluntarily continue to live in irreligion or unbelief, or because, though believing children of the Church, they remain guilty of mortal sin.

"Avoid evil," is the fundamental principle of all justice, and the first condition necessary to gain salvation. As long as man remains in the state of mortal sin, the seed of the divine Word falls in vain upon his heart.

They, however, who are in the state of sin, and who by hearing the Word of God receive light and strength to be converted and lead for the future a sinless and God-fearing life—bear fruit *thirty-fold.*

The divine Word offers to every sinner this advantage, if he hear it not as proceeding from man, but as coming—as it really does—from God.

As soon as a person is truly converted, and sincerely confesses his sins, he begins to fulfill his duties as a Christian, and by prayer and other religious exercises brings forth fruit for heaven. But this fruit is still meager and largely mixed with the cockle of venial sins and imperfections. Such newly-converted

persons frequently lack determination, not only in avoiding temptation to sin, which may again rob them of divine grace, but also in seeking after perfection and in keeping themselves free from every voluntary venial sin. They are satisfied with fulfilling those duties which they dare not neglect without offending God mortally. They think not of practising the virtue of Christian zeal with earnestness, but remain content with that degree of fidelity which merely saves them from the guilt of a grave sin of omission, although Christ calls those who are instant in the practice of virtue eight times blessed. They are unconcerned about it so long as no one can say to them: "You are a bad Christian." They do not trouble themselves to attain that degree of holiness which our vocation as children of the Church demands. The Word of God bears fruit in these thirty-fold but not sixty-fold. To gain the latter, the Christian must earnestly endeavor not only to avoid mortal sin, but also every voluntary venial sin, every little imperfection. In those who strive after this, the Word of God brings forth fruit sixty-fold.

A Christian, who is careful to avoid every venial sin and every imperfection, is more inclined to listen to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. He becomes more pleasing to God, and feels a stronger desire and a more courageous determination to fulfill His will whenever manifest. All his actions are adorned with a purer intention, because he returns the love of God with an unselfish affection. His works have more merit

in the eyes of the Almighty and his reward is very great. In him the seed bears fruit sixty-fold.

Who are those in whom the Word of God brings forth fruit a *hundred-fold?* I answer: They are those who, not content with avoiding offense to God, either mortal or venial, or with fulfilling His holy will chiefly to escape the punishment of hell or purgatory, but who, impelled by the love of God, not only walk but run with winged speed in the high path of Christian perfection. These are the souls who for love of God not only fulfill the duties of their station and do good whenever an occasion presents itself, but who strive to make all their actions as perfect as possible, performing them through motives the purest and best, that is only to please God and glorify the Redeemer. They not only seize the opportunity which their station in life offers them, but they search for occasions and means to sanctify their life, edify the good, and awaken to the truth the souls slumbering in irreligion and unbelief.

The lives of the saints evidence to us what salutary fruit for eternal life a soul can bring forth if, instead of opposing the influence of divine grace, she cooperates with determination, strength, alacrity and pure love of God.

There are saints who, though dead, continue to produce the fruit of virtue through the zeal of others, and this not only in the place where they lived, but over the entire world.

As an example, look at the Apostles who scattered

the seed of faith throughout the world, and thus extended the Church of God. Their words are still producing fruit.

The same may be said of those apostolic men who have confined their labors and preaching to certain nations—as Patrick, Remigius, Boniface, Xavier, and others.

In like manner we may speak of the different founders of religious orders. The fruit of their saintly zeal still continues, after centuries have elapsed, in the good which is still accomplished by their followers and for which they no doubt are rewarded in heaven. We need only mention St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Dominick and St. Ignatius, whose sons in Christ work to this day all over the globe in the vineyard of the Lord.

The saints will tell us on the day of judgment what great fruit the seed of holy faith and the divine Word planted by them have brought forth in the hearts of men; for, the greatest part of their work is still unknown to us. They were humble, and did not boast of their deeds, and their holy thoughts, words, wishes and acts are treasures hidden in eternity.

Imitate the saints, and listen to the Word of God; keep it, as they did, deep in your heart, and it will fructify and bring forth fruit a hundred-fold for the life to come!—Amen!

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

"For He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death."—Luke 18.

THE Gospel of to-day refers to the preparation of the Church for the great festival of Easter. This time of Lent was especially instituted in order that we might have a time in which to meditate, with more than ordinary seriousness, on the passion of Christ. All those who, believing in Christ, obey this invitation of the Church, feel their hearts filled with bitterness and aversion for the ungrateful Jews; but how few consider that when they, as Christians, sin, they become more guilty towards the Redeemer than were even the Jews!

This we will understand if we refer the words we have just read: "He shall be delivered to the Gentiles and shall be mocked and put to death," to the life of a Christian sinner.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, pray for us that we may recognize the foulness of sin, and from to-day banish every trace of it from our hearts!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Christ prophesied of Himself: "The Son of man shall be delivered to the Gentiles." This complaint is also directed to the Christian sinner. Each sin is treachery. A child of the Church who commits sin is a traitor to Christ, as Judas was; for at baptism he swore to be true to God; and, in addition to this, he has, perhaps, received Him frequently in holy Communion. A sinner is a traitor to Christ; for if he be a child of the Church, he generally prays and lives outwardly as though he were a genuine follower of Christ. He becomes a hypocrite, confessing with his lips love for God above all else, and outwardly seeking only to know and fulfill His holy will, while all the time he is acting exactly the opposite. Thus his whole life is a life of treachery.

Christ prophesies of Himself: "The Son of man shall be delivered to the Gentiles and shall be mocked and scourged." Every sinner scourges the Lord anew!

St. Alphonsus Liguori tells us that the Lord once appeared in Rome to a great sinner in the form of a young man. The woman rejoiced at His coming; but when she asked Him who He was, the figure of the youth changed, and Christ the Redeemer stood before her crowned with thorns, and His body lacerated by scourging. "Do you know Me?" asked He, the Lord. "Behold how I have suffered for and through you. When will you cease to scourge Me?" The woman, weeping bitterly, cast herself repentantly at the feet of Christ, and abandoned her evil ways.

This vision concerns not only this one sinful woman, but all sinners, and to each Christ addresses the sad question: "Do you know Me?" And to each the Apostle says: "Whoever sinneth, crucifies Christ in his heart." The sinner revives the passion of our Lord; he scourges Him anew.

Men who live in the state of mortal sin are generally guilty not only of *one* sin, but of many, both in number and kind. A man offending God by impurity is likewise often angry, envious, full of hatred towards others, and intemperate. He braids all these sinful fetters into a lash with which he scourges the Lord in his heart.

Even to a single sin several guilty acts may concur. Thus the seducer offends not only in deed, but also in thought and word; then how long, how broad, how sharp the lash becomes with which he scourges Jesus!

And not only this, but he gives scandal by his sinful life, and is the cause that others offend God and scourge Jesus by their sins of thought, word and action. We can understand how the number of these scourges is increased, if we but consider how those corrupted by one sinner lead others into the path of evil, and these again others, and so on, God only knows how long, even to the end of time.

Have you ever thought of this dreadful lash with which you yourself have scourged Jesus by your sins, and by the scandal you have given? Has not Christ the right to address the same words to you which He spoke to the sinner in Rome: "Do you know Me?"

Behold how I am scourged by the number and greatness of you sins! Oh, cease to scourge Me with your countless sins!

Christ prophesies further: "The Son of man shall be mocked."

The sinner mocks and derides Christ as God and as Redeemer. To comprehend this, we need only think of the Lord's prayer, and then consider how the sinner derides God when he repeats it!

He calls God "Father," and yet, as Christ says, he is born, through sin, of his father, the devil!

He says with his lips: "Hallowed be Thy name," and desecrates it daily by sin!

He prays with the mouth: "Thy kingdom come," and yet destroys it in his heart by sin, and in the hearts of others by his vicious life and the scandal which he gives!

He prays: "Thy will be done," and follows only his own sinful inclinations, and this with an ingratitude, a wickedness that is worse than that of the devil, because his soul has been redeemed with the blood of Christ.

He asks: "Give us this day our daily bread," and works as hard as though he thought there was no God, and every man had to take care of himself. He gives no thought to nourishing his soul by the frequent reception of holy Communion; he lives for this earth only, and cares nothing for heaven.

He prays that God may forgive him as he forgives others, and yet he refuses to pardon; what mockery!

He entreats: "Lead us not into temptation," and does not avoid, but seeks temptation.

He begs God to deliver him from evil, and remains voluntarily in a state of sin, which is the source of all evil.

Lastly.—The Son of man is, according to the prophecy of Christ, to be crucified. Every Christian who sins crucifies the Lord in his heart. He crucifies Jesus, and can not prevail upon himself to take Him from the cross of sin.

The three nails which fastened the Lord to the cross are: Custom,—the forgetfulness of eternity,—the example and society of others!

These are the three obstacles which generally prevent the conversion of a sinner.

Divine grace, however, is all powerful; may its triumph be celebrated, and may every sinner now present profit by it, in order that the Lord may, during this Lent, arise in his heart; and, celebrating Easter within it, dwell therein from this day on for evermore! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"When He drew nigh to Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way-side." —Luke 18.

TO-DAY'S Gospel, besides relating to us the prophecy of Christ concerning His approaching sufferings, speaks also of a "blind man who sat by the way-side begging."

It might at first sight appear that there is no connection between these two circumstances, and yet there is.

This blind man, begging by the way-side, personates the sinner. No one is able to restore to him his sight but He Who came into the world to suffer and die for sinners.

The particular fact to which I wish to draw your attention to-day is: The blindness of sinners. I desire the more particularly to speak of this blindness as we live in a century which boasts of its enlightenment, and of its progress in art and science.

It is true that in a temporal point of view we have reason to marvel at the inventive genius of men, but at the same time we have no less reason to wonder that these same men should be so blind and grow daily more so in regard to every thing that concerns their future life.

O Mary, thou first bright beam of Christ, the rising Sun, pray for us that we may receive light to see the

misery of that blindness with which sin encompasses men!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

At the siege of Assissi by the Turks, when the latter were attacking the cloister in which St. Clair and her sisters lived, the saint had the Host brought before the gates of the convent and cried to the Lord for help. Christ heard her prayers, and while the Turks were scaling the walls of the convent, they were suddenly struck with blindness and precipitated to the ground.

Blindness, spiritually considered, is the state in which all sinners live, especially those who, though belonging to the Church of Christ, conduct themselves like heathens. Let us draw a comparison; a blind man does not perceive that the rays of the sun descend upon the face of the earth; the darkness of night surrounds him. The sinner passes his days in spiritual blindness. He who looks with his physical eyes upon the world, sees the wonders of the wisdom, power and kindness of God. He recognizes how Providence cares for every thing, preserves every thing, and leads all things to the end for which He has destined them. And when we look about us with a heart filled with love for God, how many causes greet our sight to love, honor, worship and serve Him!

The divine attributes become clearer to us, if we think of all that God has done for mankind by the

work of Redemption. What proofs of His Wisdom, Power and Goodness we have in the creation of divine grace! But of all this the Christian sinner seems to see nothing. For him it is night, as it was night for Judas when, on the evening of holy Thursday after having unworthily partaken of the Lord's supper, he went away and betrayed Christ.

The Catholic sinner confesses with his lips all the tenets of his faith, but they do not influence his life; he remains in utter darkness, and in the light of faith lives like a blind heathen. This is especially the case if he has never been thoroughly instructed in his faith. Oh! how many spiritually blind people there are in this enlightened century, even among the children of the Church.

Whatever may be the size of an object the blind can not see it. So it is with the spiritually blind. The truth of faith stands in its eternal grandeur before the eyes of his mind, but he does not see it, he does not deign to regard it.

A blind man knows nothing of the beauty of colors, nor of the harmony which unites all things in nature and forms of them one great picture. Thus it is with one who is spiritually blind, it is as if he had no perception of the beauty of true holiness and of a virtuous life.

He experiences no longing after perfection, and regards all aspirations to a higher life as unfeasible. He is hardly aware that there have been saints upon earth. He never raises his eyes to these glorious stars in the

firmament of the Church, and if he does accidentally, these far-off luminaries, these worlds of holiness, appear but points of light, and it never occurs to him, while contemplating them, that they shine for his illumination.

The blind man does not become convinced of the existence of a thing until his hands have felt it. Thus one spiritually blind believes only that which he can seize, so to say, with his hands; he thereby dishonors his intellect and reason.

A blind man passes the most costly diamonds, the most brilliant jewels, and stretches out his hands towards a pebble which lies in his path. He is incapable of earning his livelihood, and would starve if no one took care of him. Thus, one spiritually blind starves mentally, though he is in the midst of plenty and could gather with every breath merits of incomparable worth for the life to come. He is heedless of this fact, and wastes the precious time of his life in groping about in the darkness until the approach of that night when no one can work.

A blind man is unaware of the abyss that yawns at his feet; one step more and he will be precipitated into its measureless depth. If he is in danger, he does not perceive it, and would not leave his place if a wild beast came rushing towards him ready to tear him to pieces. Thus with the man spiritually blind. He must, as a Christian, be aware that the dangers besetting salvation are manifold, and he must know what Christ has said about the broad path leading to destruction

and the torments awaiting the sinner, yet he never gives a thought to his danger, and is not concerned even if he is reminded of it.

A blind man, when threatened with some calamity, does not see the means of escape even if they are within his reach. This is exactly the case with one who is spiritually blind. He does not perceive that sureness which the Catholic faith imparts, but wanders about without a guide; or if, retaining the appearance of a Christian, he seems to perceive the light of revelation, he nevertheless sits motionless, like an owl on a withered branch, turning his eyes in every direction, but seeing nothing in the clear light of the sun.

Large numbers of these night-birds, of these spiritual owls, are to be found in the streets of cities.

A true conversion to God by His preventing grace will restore the sight to these blind men when, on some occasion in their lives, the Lord passes by, and they perceive His presence by the grace that arouses their conscience.

It is especially on great festivals of the Church, in Missions and Jubilees, that the sinner feels the approach of Jesus, and is moved to follow him like others.

Well for him if he then open his heart to the light of faith streaming upon him, or, should this light be still flickering in his heart, well for him if he endeavor, with the help of grace, to revive its feeble flame.

Christ said to the blind man: "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Sinners, and all ye who are spiritually blind, take this admonition to heart, re-animate your

faith, and you will see clearly the path of salvation. Then will you make rapid progress upon this path, and one day behold Jesus and understand the miracle which His power and love hath wrought to enlighten and save you. Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Now it came to pass, when He drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the way-side begging."—Luke 18.

THE holy time of Lent is approaching, and the Church endeavors to prepare the hearts of her children for this solemnity.

She would have us not only believe that Christ came into the world in order to save us by His bitter passion and death, but also wishes us to use strenuous endeavors to make His merits our own. Unfortunately the words of Christ to the Apostles, or rather what the Gospel says in regard to their mental condition, may be applied to many children of the Church: "They understood none of these things."

The principal cause of this intellectual blindness is the state of sin which prevents them from understanding the true import of religious truths. We have a picture of this pitiable state in the blind man who sat by the way-side begging.

The sinner is blind; we considered this truth last year on this Sunday. To-day I say: he is also a beggar.

I shall endeavor to show you the truth of this comparison, and to draw thence some important lessons.

O Mary, restorer of divine grace, pray for us that we may turn to God, and, forsaking the misery of sin, grow rich in merit as true children of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

St. Chrysostom, commenting on the parable of the prodigal son, says that the unfortunate young man feels particularly one circumstance of his miserable condition, which sinners, whom he represents, seldom take into consideration.

This circumstance is, that he served as a swine-herd, and without stated wages. He was hungry, but had nothing to eat. With how little would he have been satisfied! He craved the insipid husks which the swine devoured, yet no one offered them to him. Sinner, does your master give you bread? Do you not serve him without recompense? Are you not obliged to beg your food of the swine?

Yes; even so! The master whom the sinner serves in capacity of swine-herd, is Satan! He serves him without stipulated wages. There is no doubt of it. For what can Satan promise man in return for the slavish service of sin? He possesses nothing, nor does he rule the world. But even were he to promise something, the sinner could not be certain of his wages; for "Satan," according to the testimony of Holy Writ, "is a liar, and the father thereof." All reward is uncertain, even the very husks of enjoyment which man receives from the indulgence of his passions. How often is sin the cause even of man's temporal misery! How often does it not weary him of life, and hurl him into the suicide's grave!

But even if all the enjoyment of the world were the sinner's, his heart, created for God, would remain empty and sigh with Solomon: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity," except to serve God, to love Him, and possess Him. Oh! that the sinner would bear this in mind, and say to himself like the prodigal son: I am the son of a rich father; "the hired servants in my father's house have plenty of bread, and I here perish with hunger."

Sinner, miserable beggar, are you not ashamed of yourself? Why do you not cease begging? God alone can give you that which you ask of human creatures, He alone can satisfy the longing of your heart. Men are poor themselves, and can give you nothing for food save husks, which can not allay the hunger of your soul.

We will see the truth of this if we consider the intrinsic value of those goods which the heart of man yearns to possess.

First, man desires an occupation by which to earn a living; then he wants this occupation to be profitable enough to enable him to amass wealth. To succeed in this he becomes a beggar—begs of men.

And yet what would it avail him were he to gain all the gold of the earth? It is but dust, and he can not take it with him to the other world. Moreover, he often receives for his labor only poor wages, and frequently the harder he labors the less he is repaid.

How many such beggars are there in this world!

If they did for God and heaven only a tenth part of what they do for the world they would become, as Thomas à Kempis says, great saints, and immensely rich in the goods of heaven.

Yes, thou blessed Thomas, if men would do but a hundredth part of what they do for the world, what a great number of saints we would possess. But as it is, they are indolent in the service of God, and go begging, ask for wealth, honor, and renown. And how soon death deprives them of all they have gained by begging, while whatever is done for the service of God is gathered and kept for evermore in heaven!

The human heart craves not only possessions but also esteem, and what will not a sinner do to win distinction? and what will he not endure not to be disgraced before man or to gain his good graces? And yet of what worth is the *honor* bestowed by man? It is like vapor, which rapidly dissolves. Yet how many sycophants there are upon earth! Of those, however, who serve Him, God says: "Whosoever shall glorify me, him will I glorify." A holy life renders us an object of admiration even to the angels, and secures for us a throne in the kingdom of God.

Ambitious human creatures, why do you not think of this? why do you persist in asking man for what God will give you bountifully, if you only live in such a manner upon earth as to be worthy to be called His child?

The human heart does not alone desire the possession of wealth and honor, but it also craves enjoyment,

and the sinner goes begging to human creatures for it. But all in vain! St. Augustine rightly says: "Thou, O Lord, hast created our heart for Thee, and it can not rest, until it rests in Thee!"

The joy which man seeks from his fellow-man, how unsatisfactory and empty, how frivolous, and often debasing! The sinner deservedly merits the reproach of the Apostle: And what benefit did you derive from that of which you are now ashamed?

On the other hand, how great the enjoyment which God prepares for those who serve Him, and who unite themselves to Him in prayer! As we read in the lives of the saints, they enjoy a foretaste here below of the bliss which awaits them in eternal life.

How vain, then, for man to beg created beings to fill the void in his heart, for he can receive nothing from them which is capable of satisfying his craving; on the contrary, after he has emptied the cup of sensual pleasures, he is forced to sigh with bitterness and repentance: O joy! why hast thou deceived me?

Well for him if he feels his misery, and turns to the One Who alone is able to give all that the heart desires. Many will endeavor to silence him, when his soul sends forth her first cry to God, as the beggar was hushed in to-day's Gospel; but if casting off all fear of men he heeds them not, he will be heard, and filled with the riches of the children of God. Those who love Jesus and follow Him will give thanks and honor to God for the grace bestowed upon them.

God grant that during this Lent all begging sin-

ners, all spiritually blind, may have the happiness to sigh from the depth of their heart: Jesus, Thou hast cured me of my blindness, and delivered me from my misery! Now I see Thee and follow Thee, and I am rich through Thee, O my Lord and my all! Amen!

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He afterwards was hungry."—Matt. 4.

LENT is a time of preparation for the worthy celebration of Easter. In order to awaken a spirit of repentance in the hearts of her children, the Church, on the first Sunday of this season of grace, bids them look upon Jesus as He withdraws into the desert to fast. What a salutary and important admonition to all those who desire to partake of the infinite merits of the life, suffering and death of Christ, in order that through Him their souls may be saved!

The first condition requisite for salvation is the spirit of self-mortification. "Mortify thyself!" is spoken to every soul desirous of following Christ.

If by the time of Easter this spirit of Christian mortification is to be awakened and strengthened in the hearts of the children of the Church, and thus bring forth fruit for the life to come, we must spend the season of Lent strictly as the spirit of the Church requires, and not merely regard it as a time during which it is necessary to observe certain restrictions in our diet.

The example of Christ in the wilderness teaches us

what is the spirit of the Church in the observance of Lent.

O Mary, thou purest of the pure, who from the fisrt moment of thy conception didst crush the head of Satan, and who never hadst reason to fear him, obtain for us the spirit of mortification and repentance, as a pledge of our fidelity in following Christ!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Christ went into the wilderness and fasted forty days. This is the first circumstance which at the beginning of Lent attracts our attention, and which, if well considered, will inspire us with a certain reverence for this holy season, and a great desire to spend it properly, which is the first condition to derive benefit to our souls from the forty-days' fast.

The numbers used in Holy Writ frequently conceal a mystic meaning which, as St. Augustine and other holy fathers of the Church say, has reference to God and His kingdom.

This is especially the case with the number forty. Forty hundred years elapsed after the fall of the first man before Christ appeared on earth. After a rain of forty days, the earth was deluged, and the ark floated upon the waters, as a sign that man was not to be exterminated. Moses fasted forty days upon Mount Sinai, before he was deemed worthy to receive the commandments from the hands of God. Elijah fasted for forty

days upon Mount Horeb, before he received the greatest of all graces, the vision of God, as far as it can be given to man in the flesh to see Him. Christ Himself fasted forty days. With reason the forty martyrs, exposed naked in midwinter on the ice, prayed trembling with cold: "Lord, Thou who hast sanctified the number forty, glorify the same also in us. We are forty. Oh, let forty crowns, the reward of fidelity, be distributed among us!" How wonderfully was their prayer heard!

The days of Lent also number forty.

Our reverence for this holy season will still increase if we take into consideration that, as St. Gregory the Great, St. Basil, and other holy fathers of the Church affirm, the Apostles and the first Christians observed Lent. As proof of this, I may cite an epistle written in the year 71, to the faithful of the church of Antioch, by St. Ignatius, a disciple of St. John, in which he admonishes them to keep Lent faithfully. Let us further reflect on the manner in which Lent was kept by the Apostles and first Christians. I refer to the extreme rigor with which they observed abstinence from food. The historians and holy fathers of that time, such as St. Theophilus, Clement of Alexandria, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine, testify that the Christians of the first century fasted the entire day, and partook of a little food only in the evening; and this they continued for forty days. Others took food only once or twice a week, and others again at intervals of forty hours.

In the time of St. Bernard, who lived in the eleventh century, Christians of every station in life fasted every day during Lent until late in the afternoon, and abstained entirely from meat. Even in our own time Lent is observed very strictly by many devout people. When I was still in Europe the country people of Austria and Poland, as also the more devout persons in cities, did not touch meat during the entire season of Lent. On one occasion, I met a man in Poland who, from Wednesday in Holy Week to Easter Sunday, allowed nothing to pass his lips, not even a drop of water!

How humiliating such fervor to the Christians of our time, for whose sake the Church has been obliged to become less stringent! How few now fast as the laws of the Church require, and these few we mostly count among the sons of toil, who, on account of their hard labor, need strong nourishment, while those who have no such excuse dispense themselves with extreme indulgence. And with what right? God alone knows!

But, as Gregory and Leo the Great long ago remarked, to keep Lent in the spirit of the Church means more than to retrench from our food. This holy season is intended for the practice of general self-restraint, with a view to obtain the mastery over our inferior nature.

We must fast with all our senses. We must put a guard over our eyes, and not permit them to wander from object to object in mere curiosity. How often has an idle glance led you into temptation!

The Holy Ghost Himself says that the death of sin enters the heart through the eyes. Therefore, let your eyes, too, conform to the spirit of the precept which enjoins fasting. Guard them carefully during this Lent, and you will be benefited during life.

Mortify yourself! Fast with your sense of hearing, by not listening to idle, frivolous, indecent conversation. We fast with the ears, also, by depriving ourselves of the pleasure of hearing entertaining music.

Mortify yourself! Fast especially with your faculty of speech. Yes, the tongue! the tongue! Oh, the many useless and sinful words we utter! What a salutary self-control will it be, if, during Lent, we avoid all superfluous talking, all useless visits, and, consequently, the many dangers that lay in wait for the garrulous.

Another way of mortifying ourselves, and observing the spirit of Lent, is to abstain from frivolous, and especially sensational reading. Books are a species of company. Many have recourse to them, as they do to chit-chats, from mere curiosity. They occasion the loss of much precious time.

How little boisterous amusements and distracting enjoyments are consonant with the spirit of Lent is self-evident.

During this holy season we should lead a more quiet, solitary life; rise earlier and give more time to prayer; practise with greater zeal works of temporal and spiritual charity, and frequent the Sacraments oftener and more devoutly.

Besides these exercises of penance, and the morti-

fication of our senses, we should not neglect to mortify the inner man. Were we only to attend to this matter seriously, what a great assistance Lent would be towards attaining to holiness of life! To these inner mortifications, which are more precious to God than all outward manifestations of devotion, belong acts of humility, the suppression of all our inclinations to pride, conceit, obstinacy, and the practice of patience and self-sacrifice. These exercises awaken within us the spirit of mortification, which is the strongest defense against the assaults of temptation. Thus fortified, we shall overcome the enemy, and gain laurels that will never fade! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Then Jesus said to him: Be gone, Satan!"—Matt. 4.

THERE is but one evil, and that is sin. This evil has many different paths by which it approaches us. These paths are called temptations. It is true that of themselves temptations can not injure us. On the contrary, Holy Writ says: "Blessed is the man that endureth, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him." All depends upon our withstanding them, and to be able to do this we must heed the admonition of Christ, we must watch and especially guard ourselves against those temptations through which Satan most frequently approaches man.

There are in particular three temptations to which to-day's Gospel refers, and to which a large portion of mankind fall victims; the three temptations, namely, with which Satan dared to tempt Christ, our Lord, Himself.

Let us see, to-day, what sort of temptations these are.

O Mary, thou mighty stronghold against the hosts of the tempter, give us thy assistance, that we may come forth victorious from the fight!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

And the tempter approaching Him, said: "Command that these stones be made bread!"

To what temptation do these words refer? I say to that temptation with which Satan assaults man when he enters upon life—the immoderate care for the goods of this world. It is the temptation of excessive labor, and anxiety after a business profession in order to gain a position in society. Yes, for a great number, even for many who otherwise seem to live piously, this is the net which entangles them in numberless temptations.

This regard for the world frequently causes men to forget their last aim and end. Instead of thinking only of what is requisite for salvation, and pursuing it with their whole heart and the entire strength of their will, they live altogether for earthly things, and think seriously of nothing else. This worldly care extinguishes all their longing after perfection, and causes them to neglect those means of divine grace which are placed within their reach.

The man who is a prey to this inordinate care begins the day without prayer, and without a right intention; he neglects Mass, pious reading, and the holy Sacraments. His excuse is that his business leaves him no time for devotion, while in his intercourse with the world temptations approach him by countless roads. He hopes to satisfy the cravings of his heart with temporal wealth and pleasures; he expects to change the hard and tasteless stones of

worldly enjoyment into bread which will nourish his soul—but he is mistaken.

These perverse sentiments of the heart open wide the gate to all kinds of temptations; egotism, envy, anger, enmity, intemperance, deceit and injustice enter, and the wretched man endeavors to serve two masters, God and the world. But the world, at last, completely ensnares him, and, instead of conquering temptation, he is vanquished by it.

Satan said to Jesus after he had carried Him to the pinnacle of the temple: "Cast thyself down!" To what temptation do these words refer? To that dangerous state of the heart which causes man through presumption to fall a victim of his own foolhardiness.

And how? He neither fears God, nor the possibility of committing sin; he trusts in himself too much, and thinks that there is no danger of his swerving from the right path, and, while thus feeling secure, instead of avoiding temptation, he runs into it.

To this class of tempted persons belong those who are satisfied with being nominal children of the true Church, and who think that, because they are members of that Church out of whose pale there is no salvation, they will, without doubt, gain heaven. In a word, they are strangers to that fear of which St. Paul speaks when he says: "Work your salvation with fear and trembling." To such people Satan need not go, they themselves seek him!

To this class belong also those who, in the selection of their place of business or their home, pay no atten-

tion to facilities for hearing Mass and receiving the Sacraments.

Finally, to this class belong those who are addicted to drinking, visiting bar-rooms, gambling; those who think only of pleasure, frequent dangerous company, read immoral books, and imagine that all this, in reality, has no evil consequences, and will not lead them into sin. Woe to these! They love the danger and will perish in it.

Lastly, Satan showed to Christ from the summit of a mountain all the kingdoms of the world, and said to Him: "All these will I give Thee if, falling down, thou wilt adore me." What temptation is this? It is the temptation of self-love, of vanity, of pride in all its forms, a sin which deprives even virtuous actions of their merit. It is that self-adoration which causes man, even in a life devoted to piety, to seek more his own honor than the honor of God.

And yet how small, how trivial, is the honor which the world can give to man. Even were it to bestow all its glory and applause, how infinitely small would this be, when compared to God and the kingdom which He has promised and will give us! Those who are convinced of this truth will doubtless meet the tempter with an energetic: "Be gone!"

But it is in this determination, in this energy, that man is most deficient. Were this not the case, did he not waver, Satan would not hope, by again and again renewing his temptations, to succeed in the end; he would not even dare to tempt us. He knows well

that he can do us no harm by tempting us, provided we remain firm, but that, on the contrary, he would only give us occasions to merit and adorn our crown of victory with jewels of virtue. St. Ignatius says: "Courage on our part discourages Satan." If, however, he sees that we are in the least inclined to yield, then he is most persevering, and, tempting us again and again, attacks us on all sides and in all possible ways. Perceiving that he does not succeed in one attempt and through the instrumentality of one person, he makes a second attempt and seeks more efficient auxiliaries. He knows from experience how to undermine the foundation of great virtues and destroy them.

The one thing which frightens him and causes him to retreat is a decided: "Be gone!"

In order, however, to feel strong and resolute, we must think daily and continually on the certainty of death, and on judgment, which one day will decide whether we are to dwell for evermore in heaven or in hell.

If in temptation we turn to our crucified Saviour, and, making the sign of the cross, call on Jesus with the lips and the heart, Satan will flee, victory will be ours, and angels approaching us will console us with sweet thoughts of heaven!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And the tempter coming, said to Him."—Matt. 4.

GOD wills that all men should be saved, as St. Paul assures us, and Lent reminds us emphatically of the truth of these words.

Many of the mysteries of the life of Christ, to which the Church refers during Lent in the Gospels at Mass, are evidences that Christ came into the world to teach men how to live in order to gain salvation, especially the mysteries of His apostolic life, which ended with His suffering and death upon the cross.

God, it is true, allows Satan to tempt us, but only in order to prove our fidelity, and to recompense us the more in the world to come.

If men fail in this trial of liberty, then they have not employed the means God offers them to issue victorious from the strife. What means are these? A glance at the manner in which the Church observes Lent will answer this question.

O Mary, Mother of the elect, pray for us that we may be of the number of those who stand victoriously the test of temptation!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

At the commencement of Lent the Church puts

ashes upon the heads of her children, saying: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and that into dust thou shalt return." The Church desires to keep the thought of the certainty and proximity of death alive in the hearts of her children. One of the chief reasons why so many souls, though ransomed by the blood of Christ, are lost, is their incomprehensible forgetfulness of death. If all men possessed that consciousness of death of which the Apostle speaks, and remembered its certainty, its nearness, they would never be lost for eternity. What is it that generally leads men into temptation and takes from them all strength and courage to withstand it?

His sinful inclinations, his desire for the goods, honors, and pleasures of this world, together with the forgetfulness of the certainty and nearness of death.

Oh, that all men would each morning put ashes on their heads in spirit, and repeat the words of the Church on Ash-Wednesday: Remember that thou art dust, and that to dust thou shalt return. Think that this day is perhaps your last! How many of those who in the morning go bright and happy to their labor, are brought home at night—corpses! If this should be the case with you, what then? As ashes placed upon burning coals deaden and even extinguish their glow, so this recollection will reduce and stifle the fire of passion.

If men would occasionally take a solitary ramble in some cemetery, and thus awaken within themselves the recollection of the certainty and nearness of death,

they would gain strength for the fight against temptations of selfishness, ambition, and worldliness. How wealth, honors, and pleasures lose their attraction in the silent cities of the dead! Smoke they are and vapor, viewed from the brink of the grave.

Is it not astonishing to see how anxious men are to render their condition in life as favorable to ease and comfort as possible, how careful they are to evade anything that might endanger their welfare in this world?

They never give a thought to the shortness and uncertainty of this life, to the dangers that always hang over their heads; they do not consider that daily and hourly men die, and that soon they, too, must say to themselves: My turn has come.

They hear and know that nothing is so sure, nothing as inevitable as death, and yet as a saint of latter times, the blessed Hofbauer, whose canonization is now in progress, said: "Men know that they must die, and yet they do not believe it, but live as if this life were the only one they would ever possess, the only one for which they need care. Hence their negligence in all that pertains to their salvation, and hence also their eternal destruction."

The Church requires her children during Lent to mortify themselves by observing the laws prescribed for this season. She not only demands of them to abstain from meat and partake of only one meal a day, but she desires above all to awaken and strengthen in their hearts the spirit of self-abnegation.

Holy Writ says: "The life of man upon earth is a

warfare." To conduct it properly and victoriously we must follow the admonition of Christ and mortify ourselves.

The second cause of so many being lost is the want of the true spirit of repentance, and self-humiliation. Christ sent His Apostles as missionaries into the world with this message: Tell the people that if they do not repent they shall all perish. And St. Paul says: "And they who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences." Man craves happiness; while here below he wishes to enjoy the pleasures of an earthly paradise, and hopes one day to share, besides, the joys of heaven.

How many there are to whom the reproach of the Apostle may be justly addressed: "Whose god is their belly!" The desire of pleasure and excitement leads man into temptation, and causes him to indulge sinful inclinations, to commit mortal sin, and so lose eternal life.

The Church exhorts her children to live in retirement and meditation during Lent, and to devote more time to prayer and religious exercises. Why are so many souls lost even among the children of the Church? I answer, because they have not the spirit of prayer and contemplation, because they have not recourse to pious books for holy thoughts. Men live thoughtlessly, and do not take time to say a daily prayer or think with recollected minds of God and the eternal truth of His Word. They do not reflect or meditate upon what they believe. They do not reduce to prac-

tice the teachings of their faith, but live, although members of the Church, like Pagans. It is for this reason that Christians as well as heathens are lost. Jeremias has said: "With desolation is the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in the heart." Would to God that this reproach could not be referred to Christians!

St. Teresa says: "I fear not for a soul who prays." But how few really pray while they are going through their devotions! Only too many deserve the reproach of the Lord: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

We either pray not at all, or fail in the manner, frequency, and perseverance of our aspirations to God, especially in time of temptation. Hence so many are powerless to resist the attacks of passion, and miserably fall.

The Church desires that her children, during Lent, should frequently and attentively hear the word of God and endeavor to profit by it. All, however, do not listen to her. But too many read their reproach and their condemnation in the words of Christ to the Jews. Christ himself reproaches them, saying: "You hear not the words of God, because you are not of God."

There are many Christians who, throughout the year, never hear a sermon, or who, if they hear one, listen to it not as to the word of God, and as if God Himself were addressing them, but regard it merely in its human element; hence their indifference to profit by

it for the life to come, and hence also their eternal destruction.

The Church wishes her children to meditate, especially during Lent, upon the passion and death of Christ, in order that the love of the cross may fill their hearts. Christ says: "He who will follow me must take up his cross daily;" and the Holy Ghost: "In your patience you shall possess your souls."

How many Christians neither love nor esteem the cross! yet they must endure the trials and afflictions of life. Their aversion to suffering only makes their burden heavier and more irksome. Murmuring against the decrees of Providence, they carry their cross as did the thief who was crucified at the left of our Lord. They forget that they can only enter the abode of the blessed by following Christ who walked before us the road of the cross to open for us the gates of heaven. Hence their weakness and faithlessness under trials and tribulations; hence, too, their eternal destruction.

The Church further desires her children during Lent to confess their sins and receive the Most Blessed Sacrament devoutly and worthily. That all do not comply with this wish, is evident from the fact, that the Church, to our great shame, has been obliged to give the following precept: "Confess your sins at least once a year to a priest duly authorized, and receive holy Communion at Easter or thereabout."

They are in the greatest danger of making it the occasion of still greater evil. People who can only be prevailed upon by the most positive order to have re-

course to the Sacraments, run a great risk of receiving them unworthily. Human respect may drive them to the confessional and the holy table, but the chances are that they return from them more wicked, more laden with guilt than before.

Were the children of the Church to receive the Sacraments frequently and worthily, the consoling words of Christ would be fulfilled in them: "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life;" he "abideth in Me and I in him." Yet how many men neglect to receive the blessed Sacrament, or else receive it without preparation or unworthily. This is the cause of the loss of many souls among Christians. Therefore, let us live, not only during Lent, but all our days, in the spirit in which the Church observes Lent, and let us practise those pious exercises which she recommends in order that after the Good-Friday of our life here below, we may celebrate Easter in the joys of life everlasting! Amen!

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"And His face did shine as the sun."—Matt. 17.

THE Gospel read by the Church on the first Sunday in Lent invites her children to employ this time of grace in cleansing themselves from the stain of sin, in freeing themselves from the slavery of Satan, in overcoming temptation, in one word, in destroying sin. To-day's Gospel teaches that a true child of the Church and of Christ must not be satisfied with not offending God, nor living separated from Him in the state of mortal sin; but he must endeavor to lead a holy life, and follow Christ closely.

At the same time, the words of to-day's Gospel indicate the condition necessary to walk the path of perfection, to follow Christ, and to become more and more like Him.

The evangelist says: "*And His face did shine as the sun.*" *What meaning has this in reference to our striving after perfection?*

I shall answer this question to-day.

O Mary, thou sublime woman, whom St. John in the Revelation saw clothed with the sun, beg Jesus to grant us purity of intention, that we may live and die for Him alone!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"The face of Jesus did shine as the sun."

The expression, "as the sun," refers not only to a flood of light, which even the moon and a multitude of stars send forth; but also to certain other qualities of the sun, which our actions must figuratively copy if we desire our life to resemble that of Jesus, and to glorify God.

I will speak first of purity of intention, namely, that quality in all our actions and omissions, in all our thoughts, words, wishes, and works, which directs them at all times to the glory of God. The example of Christ speaks to us of this most forcibly. Through the Incarnation of the Son of God, the sun rose gloriously in the bosom of Mary, for, according to St. Paul, the first words of Christ in the moment of His conception were: "Behold I come to do Thy will, O God." "I have meat to eat which you know not," He said to the disciples when His apostolic mission was at its height. And again: "Father, not My will, but Thine be done," was his prayer, and the outpouring of His heart on the last evening of His life.

He asks His disciples to live in imitation of Him. Whence the Apostle says: "Whatsoever you do, do all things for the glory of God." "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," thus He teaches those to pray who belong to Him, declaring all worthless that is not done according to the holy will of God, and for His glory.

We will perceive the importance and necessity of this state of mind in following Christ upon the path of Christian perfection, if we but consider the last aim and end of creation, and especially of man. For that last aim and end is no other than the outward glorification of God, through voluntary obedience to His holy will.

The light of the sun symbolizes that purity of intention expressed by the words: "All to the great glory of God," which is the property of a truly fervent soul.

Before the sun rises, all nature is veiled in darkness, notwithstanding the presence of those large luminous worlds, the stars. Similar is the state of his soul in the service of God, who thinks only of himself, and sees nothing beyond his own desires. The spiritual life of such a man is shrouded in the darkness of night.

The sun, once above the horizon, rises ever higher and higher; and, by the manner in which he sends out his light, seems to say: Every-where, all over the earth, as far as my rays can pierce, I give light, all for the greater glory of God!

So it is with the Christian, who, during the day, preserves in his heart the pure intention of doing the will of God, and this only; who lives for God alone, as his last aim and end.

Unhappily, we have but few suns here below who shine like that of St. Ignatius, only to honor the Almighty, and who in all they do, desire, or suffer, seek

only to glorify their God. Christians who wish to live as Christians, generally have in part this good intention. In a measure, they seek to glorify God; but, as the moon borrows her light from the sun, and shows through it her own face, so their works, made bright with the light of God's service, frequently show that "I" which obtrudes itself in various ways.

The sun proceeds on his course whether the sky be clear or clouded, whether the air be calm or disturbed by storm. Thus those walk upon earth who live for God alone, who see him only in all their actions. They walk onward, never heeding the obstacle they encounter, calm alike in misery and in prosperity. How different from those who, as long as nothing stands in their way, are filled with zeal; but who, as soon as an obstacle hinders their progress, become despondent and abandon their purpose!

The light of the sun never changes, while that of the moon increases, diminishes, and, at times, disappears altogether. A soul sustained by the pure intention of living for God alone remains ardent and steadfast, while one who acts through other motives is changeable, sometimes zealous, again thoughtless, and often even forsakes ignominiously the work which he undertook for the glory of God.

At the close of to-day's Gospel the Evangelist says: "*They saw no man, but only Jesus.*"

How few there are to all whose actions these words can be truthfully applied. They, perhaps, do look up to Jesus, and try to follow Him, and become like Him;

but their eyes wander too often from Him to themselves and others. They desire, while practising works of piety, to satisfy their self-love, and to give all due respect to human considerations. Hail, to those Christians of whom it may be said: In all they do, they think of Jesus only, of being pleasing in His sight, of following, of serving Him, of becoming daily more like Him, and of possessing Him! They will be led by the spirit of prayer to Mount Tabor, and their life will be transformed into a life of such holiness that it will shine as the sun! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And His garments became white as snow."—Matt. 17.

"LORD, cleanse me more and more," sighed David to God. We all have cause to repeat his cry, even if we forsake the path of evil, and endeavor to walk in the footsteps of the just. Though we try to exercise ourselves in good works, we are yet far from the perfection we ought to aspire to in all our actions, especially in those of daily routine, which our vocation upon earth obliges us to perform. These we must render, like the wheat in the Gospel, worthy of being placed in the granaries of heaven, and, despite their many imperfections, strive to keep in the category, so to say, of good deeds.

We are reminded of this in to-day's Gospel: "And His garments became white as snow."

The garments which clothe our soul, are the good works which we practise, according to our station in life. If each one of these were performed with the purest intention, and were free from every stain of imperfection, what an adornment they would prove to be, how they would embellish the soul, and what a gain they would be for heaven! Unfortunately this is seldom the case. There are few of our works whose brightness is untarnished by sin.

We will consider to-day, particularly, the stains

which deface our daily works, and meditate upon the best means of avoiding and guarding against them.

O Mary, thou who, according to Holy Writ, standest robed in garments of gold, before the throne of the Most High, thou, purest of the pure, in thought and deed, grant that we, taught and guided by thee, may gain strength to free ourselves from every stain of imperfection and sin!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

St. John, speaking in the Apocalypse of the saints in heaven, says: "They were clothed in white robes."

These white garments and these shining, precious material of which they are made, says he, are righteousness and good works. This material is made up principally of our daily works. For, in order to become holy it is not necessary to perform great and astonishing outward deeds. The Almighty has not chosen or called every one for such a career; hence every one has not received the divine grace which it requires. As to those great works of which we read in the lives of the saints, they were not the means of making them what they were; it was, rather, the perfection with which they performed their daily duties which made them so rich in merit.

A friend of St. Francis de Sales used to say of this saint, that he did nothing unusual, and yet all that he

did seemed unusual, on account of the perfect manner in which it was performed.

And what are the stains which cling to our daily works and deface them, and often even totally destroy them, by robbing them of all merit for the life to come? They are these:

First, the stain of *indolence*, arising from a want of energy to rise early, and always at the same time, in order to say our morning prayers and to implore God to protect and bless us during the day. All who are indolent in rising, who begin the day slothfully and without devout, earnest prayer, stain thus early in the morning the robes of their soul.

The second stain on the robe of our daily works, is want of a *pure intention* to live that day only to fulfill the will of God, and to do all that we do for Him alone. We seek too much after self, and are too often actuated by the temporal motive of gaining wealth, honor, or enjoyment. This want of a pure intention is a stain on the white garment of our daily work.

Further, this robe is soiled by an *ill-regulated performance* of the duties of our state of life. We act either too sluggishly or too precipitatedly, with reluctance and through habit. We enter upon our daily duties without raising our minds to God, and, during the day, forget His holy presence. Instead, we often, without reflection or precaution, seek company and dissipation, fritter away our time in idle conversation, and, of course, sully our robe with many sins of the

tongue. Who can count the sins that are daily committed by piously-inclined persons through want of a proper guard over their tongues?

Another abundant source of stains on our good works is *want of charity*. Under this head may be classed cutting remarks, unkind accusations and reproaches, often accompanied with contemptuous and offensive bearing. Then we contract stains by omitting to labor at the instruction and improvement of others, and, in general, to perform corporal and spiritual works of mercy. There are, besides, stains of rash suspicions and judgments, and even of participation in petty backbiting and calumny. I must not forget jealousy, envy, and general narrowness.

Stains in abundance fall on our daily actions from a *want of true love for the cross*. Hence comes peevishness, hence impatience, that almost tears our good deeds to tatters. This is especially the case when, through want of love for the cross, man is tempted to murmur against divine Providence, or to submit unwillingly to the decrees of the Almighty.

To these may also be added the spots which arise from obstinacy, selfishness, conceit, presumption, and the want of mortification, a virtue without which life can not be truly holy. In conclusion, the luster of our daily works is stained, and the robe of our soul discolored by our carelessness in preventing temptations from approaching us, or by our sloth in banishing them as soon as they draw nigh.

What a subject for self-examination is all I have just

said to you, my dear listener! How many imperfections, think you, blemish the record of your good works?

As St. Ignatius assures us, the means of freeing ourselves from these imperfections lie in the unremitting exercise of particular examination, or the so-called special daily examine of conscience. Resolve that, from to-day, you will examine earnestly and faithfully your conscience, and will choose, as subject of your examine, one after the other, all the points I have placed before you. Then the robes of your good works, gradually cleansed from all imperfection, will become more and more white, until you will shine, clothed in most radiant garments, in the community of the saints!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles."—Matt. 17.

WE are admonished by the transfiguration of Christ upon Mount Tabor, that we who have been enlightened by the Saviour, instructed by His Word, guided and encouraged by His example, must not be satisfied with living as a man among men—a purely human life. Destined, as we are, for a supernatural aim and end, we must endeavor to lead here upon earth the life of the blessed, in heaven, the life of angels, in accordance with the words of the great Apostle: "But our conversation is in heaven." And further, we must live in this world, shrouded in the night of sin, in such a manner as to become a light to others.

If we live thus, we shall secure, even in this world, genuine happiness; and we shall be intensely happy if we make our spiritual abode in the three places which, as I conceive, figure the three tabernacles that St. Peter wished to build upon Mount Tabor. These, if we are in earnest, are here upon earth in our possession, in the sanctuary of the Church.

They are: The pulpit,—the confessional—the altar.

In to-day's sermon I shall explain the manner in which I conceive this.

O Mary, thou who art first among the saints, ob-

tain for us that we may dwell joyfully in those three places in the sanctuary of the Almighty, from which the stream of heavenly bliss flows upon the world.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first tabernacle, or the first place to which I point, in the sanctuary of God, and which, if we properly dwell therein, will prompt us to say, with the Apostle: It is good for us to be here; is not the tabernacle of Moses the Christian pulpit, or meditation upon the divine Word? Christ Himself has said: "Blessed are those who hear and keep the Word of God." And again: "Those who are of God will hear his word."

The Gospel tells us how Mary Magdalene thirsted to hear the words of Christ, and how she forgot all else in the joy of sitting at his feet and listening to Him.

It is certainly a good sign when a Christian loves to hear the Word of God as it is expounded in the churches every Sunday and holyday; but this is not enough, and no child of the Church should be content with merely this. He should not rest until he is thoroughly instructed in all the doctrines of his faith, in the entire science of salvation, in order not only to know his faith, but to regulate his life in accordance with its precepts. He must take the truths of faith to heart, and enter into the spirit of contemplation, of true heart-felt prayer. To meditate upon the Word of God, to hold communion with Him, should be re-

garded as the most important occupation of our life. To hear God's Word, as it were, from His own mouth, unites us to Him personally. Thrice blessed lot, if, as St. John of the Cross says, our life in faith through prayerful communion with God allow us, even here upon earth, to taste the joys of heaven, as did so many of the saints. The soul who experiences this may well exclaim: It is good for us to be here!

The place in the sanctuary of God which I liken unto the second tabernacle of Elias is the *confessional.*

If a Christian is determined to walk in the path of holiness, he will, of his own free will, approach often the Sacrament of Penance. He will confess his sins, and strive to cleanse himself from the dust of daily imperfections, in order to secure for himself an abundance of actual graces, and thus increase sanctifying grace, which augments the splendor of our transfiguration into a likeness with God.

Every Christian who does this with the burning zeal of an Elias, and who is filled with the desire of making progress upon the path of perfection, will have reason to rejoice, and will feel at rest and secure, because his humble submission to the minister of Christ—the confessor—has freed him from the danger of being deceived by the wiles of Satan.

The more at rest the heart is, the surer is it to fulfill the most holy will of God, and the more courageous and determined the soul is to traverse the path that leads to heaven. She has cause to exclaim, comforted by the sight of the confessional: It is good to be here!

The third place to which I refer in the sanctuary of God is the *Altar*—the tabernacle and shrine of Christ, where He really and personally dwells among us.

From this shrine issues the word which Christ spoke to the Samaritan woman: If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is who speaketh to thee! The Samaritan woman did not know. We do. What exultations, therefore, should every Christian feel when he thinks of the happiness of being so near Jesus, of speaking to Him, yea, even of taking Him to his heart! There are, in this regard, three circumstances which heighten this happiness.

First.—Christ is near me and with me; I can go to Him, go to the tabernacle, where He dwells, as often as I wish! O what happiness!

Who does not envy Mary the happiness which was bestowed upon her, in the privilege of dwelling for thirty years under the same roof with Christ!

As children of the Church, in the quiet of the house of God, where Christ dwells in the Most Holy Sacrament, we partake of this happiness. Yes, we possess one advantage. Even Mary could not speak to Jesus as often as she liked, at all times. Jesus worked by the side of His foster-father Joseph, and at such times could not speak to His mother. Here, in the tabernacle, Jesus is ready at every moment of the day or night to listen to us, to speak to us, and to bestow graces upon us.

Christ sacrifices Himself for me upon the altar! I have the grace to assist at the sacrifice which He of-

fered for me upon the cross! O what happiness! Especially, as the sacrifice upon the cross was offered but once, while that upon the altar is renewed as often as Mass is read.

And still more, by Holy Communion I am permitted to receive Him into my heart, body and soul, as God and Man, to be transformed into Him! O what happiness!

It is by this means that I shall know Him personally, that I shall love Him; and, if this is accomplished, then I shall have, with St. Francis Xavier, St. Teresa, and all the saints, a foretaste of the infinite happiness which Christ has prepared for us in heaven.

How well for all believing Christians it would be, if they benefited by the presence of Christ, upon the altar, in the tabernacle!

Where could a human being be found, be it man or woman, youth or maiden, who, visiting the Blessed Sacrament daily, hearing Mass daily, receiving Holy Communion frequently, and showing, by his gratefulness, that a love like that of St. John for Christ filled his heart, would not prove himself a Christian in the fullest sense of the term, and for whose salvation we would have no cause to fear.

Let us, therefore, resolve to benefit by these three holy places in the sanctuary of God's Church, and we shall, with grateful hearts, exclaim to the Lord: It is good to be here! Amen!

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"And He was casting out a devil and the same was dumb."—Luke 11.

AS St. James remarks, and as we are taught by experience, Satan exercises a great power over the tongue of man. There is, in fact, nothing through which man sins more than through the tongue, beginning with sinful gossiping, breaking the commandment of charity towards our neighbor, and ending with blasphemy.

Cursing and blasphemy is the language of devils, and they stamp men here upon earth as children of the Evil One!

But Satan knows also how to offend God, and lead man to ruin, by influencing the tongue in the opposite direction, namely, by inducing him to maintain a sinful silence.

Let us consider, to-day, in how many ways this may be done, and I wish I could deliver every soul here present, who is possessed of a dumb demon, whose number, I fear, is greater than we suppose.

O Mary, thou who didst raise thy voice so powerfully in the "Magnificat" to glorify God, and who,

after saying: "Be it done to me according to Thy word," didst become the mother of the Incarnate Word, pray for us, that we may obtain the grace to glorify God by every word which our tongue pronounces!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

I said that there is a silence which is sinful, and which, in the words of the Gospel, may be called a dumb devil. I shall, in to-day's sermon, particularize and explain this assertion.

The greater part of men every morning commit sin by silence, in not opening their lips to honor God by prayer. They rise from their bed like dumb animals.

It is a sin of omission not to give thanks to God for the night that has passed, not to worship Him with our first thoughts as our Creator, our Father, our final end, and not to beseech Him to bestow upon us the grace to glorify Him by our conduct during the day.

The dawn of morning, the first rays of the rising sun, ought to remind man of this holy duty, as well as the joyful songs of the birds, especially of the lark, which, rising high in the sky early every morning, shows man that it is his duty to praise with his tongue the Lord, to give Him thanks, to pray to Him as soon as he awakens.

But in order to serve Him well we should, not only in the morning, but also during the day, raise our

hearts piously to God, and animate ourselves by short, pious prayers and ejaculations.

We must also make use of every opportunity to remind others, by word and action, to serve and glorify God; and we must, further, admonish sinners, and instruct those in their faith, that are erring. How many opportunities we have of doing this during the day, had we but the will!

Such remarks and exhortations, however short, fall like seed upon the soil of the heart, and in due time bear fruit. Let us remember the exhortation of St. Ignatius to St. Francis Xavier: "Friend, what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" and his oft-repeated admonition: "Xavier, conquer thyself!" These short exhortations were for Xavier the seed from which the holiness of his entire life proceeded.

Why are we silent when we have reason, in our association with our neighbor, to call his attention to the salvation of his soul, the only real necessary labor of man's life,—to speak to him of the truth of our holy religion,—to warn him of the evil of sin, to point out to him the corrupt principles of the enemies of the Church in these days, and to converse with him on the dogmas of our holy faith? Why is it that we are silent and do not speak to him of these things whenever an opportunity presents itself?

The reason is—that we ourselves are not zealous enough in the service of God, and too little instructed in our faith, and think that it is the duty of the priest

to teach others, and lead them upon the path of virtue, and not of every zealous child of the Church. What a deception! We speak to others of so many useless things, why not, rather, on this most important subject! Fear of man is what mostly prevents us. We do not possess the courage to speak, and are silent, even when the honor of the Church and her servants are publicly attacked. This is all sinful silence.

We can, however, sin still in another manner, by culpable silence, while associating with others. This is the case when we hear others spoken ill of, and omit, by a word uttered at the right moment, to remind the speaker that he is doing wrong. St. Augustine had placed on the wall of his dining-room the words: "Let all remain away, who would speak evil of others."

Further, we frequently omit to admonish others, simply through a contemptible fear of man. This silence becomes the more sinful when false rumors are spread and the good name of any one is defamed by falsehoods. Who knows but the slandered person may thereby lose his position, his office, his fortune? and yet, we are silent from fear of man—how heartless! We do speak in behalf of the injured party, with the excuse: It is not my affair. *Yes, it is your affair*, for it is said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The same takes place when, knowing that some one exposes himself to a danger, which threatens either his person or his possessions, we remain silent and do not warn him in time.

So also in regard to personal enmity. How few misunderstandings would arise, or would be quickly righted, how seldom would neighborly love be wounded, were a word of excuse or of explanation spoken at the right time!

This admonition, concerning sinful silence, regards, in particular, parents and superiors, who, by their station and office, are obliged to speak to others, to instruct, to warn, and to punish them.

Unhappy those children who, in youth, have not been instructed by their parents, in the truths and principles of their holy faith, on the necessity of perseverance in prayer, and who have not been taught in such a manner that when they leave home they are in no great danger of losing their faith! Unhappy the children, whose parents, when asked if their children know how to pray or receive the holy Sacraments, answer: I can not tell; I do not know. Father, mother, why are you silent? why do you not question your child in regard to this matter? Woe to the children whose parents are too indulgent, who never reprove them, but pass over their sinful life in silence, without warning or punishing!

The silent devil causes the greatest evil there, where all other bad spirits are forced to flee, when man speaks the truth; namely, in the confessional.

How many confess, but confess unworthily,—and why? They are possessed by the silent devil, who keeps them by a false shame from confessing fully and candidly.

They confess, but they confess only a few, instead of all their great sins!

They confess, but they do not confess their great sins according to their number and kind as they should—they are prevented by false shame. They pass over, for instance, in silence, a sin against the sixth commandment, or the circumstance that the persons with whom they sinned were married or related to them. They confess their mortal sins, but do not mention their number as accurately as they might; they either say nothing of the number, or seek to lessen it.

They confess that they sinned in words, but not that they were guilty in thought and desire. They are silent and conceal, and do not answer frankly when questioned by the confessor.

They confess what they have done themselves, but speak of none of the nine ways of being accessory to another's sin, such as provocation, approval, bad advice or example.

They are willfully silent concerning all this, and thus confess unworthily—and what is the result? All the evil spirits, that is, the sins by which the sinner was possessed, remain in the heart. If they are to be driven out by absolution, the dumb devil must be the first sent hence.

God grant that this may be the case with all those of my listeners, who are possessed by the dumb devil! May it be so!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."—Luke 11.

IF we asked the children of the Catholic Church: Are you earnest in the desire to save your soul? we would not find one who would not answer this question with a confident "yes." And yet what deception lies in this declaration and assurance!

By far the greater number of the children of the Church "halt between two sides," as did the Israelites in the time of Elias. They do not wish to incur the displeasure either of God or of the world. They want to serve two masters, so as to enjoy a paradise here below, and also possess eternal life in heaven.

Too many are wanting in character, in determination; hence their imperfect life as children of the Church, and their great danger of deserting the standard of Christ and going over to the colors of antichrist.

O Mary, pray for us, that we may receive that spirit of determination which filled the hearts of St. John and St. Magdalene, who had the happiness of standing, on the day of Redemption, at the foot of the holy cross.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

To understand thoroughly the words: "He that is not with Me is against Me," we must first consider what it means to be with Christ.

To be with Christ means: To live in the state of *sanctifying grace*. This sanctifying grace is bestowed upon us in baptism, and by it we become children of the holy Church, which is the mystical body of Christ, and are changed from children of Satan into children of God.

To be with Christ, and to abide with Him, means also to obey zealously the inspirations of *actual* grace, in order to progress in the following of Christ, and the imitation of His virtues. The more faithfully we do this, the nearer shall we draw to Christ, and the more closely shall we follow His divine example.

To be with Christ means to be bound to Him in all our actions by ties of holy *love*, so that we can say with truth: Jesus, my thought,—Jesus, my desire,—Jesus, my light,—Jesus, my strength, my consolation, my example, my love!

To be with Christ means to be able to say truthfully: There are many things which, in my station of life, must engage my attention and occupy my mind; but, in truth, one *thought* is ever uppermost in my soul, which is my first when I awaken in the morning, which accompanies me all day, and which is my last at night; and this thought is Jesus Christ, present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

To be with Christ means that we are able to say: Many cares force themselves upon me, and oblige me

to converse and deal with others; but I have no more important *occupation* than to commune with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, either on the altar, or in my own breast, after holy Communion.

To be with Christ means to confess with truth: I have many wishes; I long after the company of many persons, and the possession of many things; but I have no greater *desire* than to please my Jesus, and to procure for myself the happiness of approaching Him in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and of receiving Him, body and soul, into my heart.

I feel the pain of parting from those whom I love, from places and occupations which consoled me in the service of God; but none of my *griefs* can be compared with that which I experience when I am obliged to forego the sweetness of Jesus' presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament, or miss the happiness of receiving Him.

I understand and feel thoroughly what St. Augustine and St. Bernard each said of himself: "Nothing pleases me, which does not speak to me of Jesus, which does not remind me of Him."

The most solemn confession of my heart, the feeling of my innermost soul, are expressed in these few words: O Jesus! my All!

Considering this, we must comprehend the truth of the words of Christ: "Who is not with Me is against Me," for every soul not in the state of sanctifying grace is in the state of disgrace, and, therefore, separated from Christ. "What fellowship between light and

darkness?" asks St. Paul, "and what concord hath Christ with Belial?"

Whoever has not the holy dispositions to which we have heard the pious soul give utterance; whoever can not truly say "Jesus, my thought, my desire, my consolation, my love," thinks more of other things and persons than of Christ, longs for them more than for Christ, finds more consolation in their possession and intercourse than in that of Christ, and therefore, instead of walking towards Christ, departs from Him.

The meaning of the words which Christ adds: "And who gathereth not with Me, scattereth," will now be easily understood.

A Christian who is truly with Christ, and entirely His, gathers innumerable graces, because of his proximity to Christ, who is the Giver of all graces—just as a man in the sunshine receives more light and warmth than he who stands in the shade. He gathers graces in abundance; and, what is of greater importance, uses them as the Giver designs, namely, to follow Christ, to imitate His virtues, and to fulfill the duties of his station—accomplishing all that is required of him with ease, assurance, consolation, and joy, because Jesus is with him.

On the other hand, the Christian who is wanting in determination to labor, for love of Jesus, in the service of God, *scattereth!* He loses many divine graces through want of sufficient esteem for them, and by not following their inspiration with a well-disciplined mind—he scattereth! He does not seek opportunities of do-

ing good; but, on the contrary, loses those which are offered him—he scattereth!

He lives in a state of distraction; and, influenced, as he is, by wordly-minded people, or by human respect, he is in danger of leaving much undone that is of great importance, or even necessary, for his own or his neighbor's sanctification.

Such a man lives in a state of continual doubt, unable to decide what would be best for him to do in order to please the Lord and save his soul. He makes resolutions, and abandons them—often scatters or loses the merits he had commenced to gather from his good works; he puts them, as Holy Writ says, into a bag full of holes. Therefore, if we would belong to God, and abide with Him forever, we must go onward with unwavering determination—we must follow Him and live for Him; thus shall we continually gather merits, to be laid up for us in the kingdom of eternal recompense.

This fixedness of purpose shone forth in the first days of the Church, immediately after the coming of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles were armed with this determination, when, after preaching the Gospel of Christ, they were thrown into a dungeon and summoned thence by the high priest, to give an account of their intention to disseminate the Word of Christ and extend His Church throughout the world as He had enjoined.

In the footsteps of the Apostles followed all the first faithful of Jerusalem and of the entire world. They lived, spoke and suffered in a way that gave evidence

of their determination to follow Christ and obey His Word, even though it would cost them their lives. It is this spirit of resolution which shines so brilliantly in the conduct of the saints, and which made them saints.

Although this firmness of resolution was always important, and a sign and test of the true children of the Church, it is especially so in our time, when holy Church and her servants suffer such severe persecution.

The power of a regular army consists principally in the unity of their movements. We are children of the militant Church, whose life on earth is a warfare. The closer we draw together, and the more fixed our determination, the surer will be our victory as children of the Church, because, trusting firmly in Christ, we shall confess Him without fear before heaven and earth! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And the last state of that man becometh worse than the first."—Luke 11.

IF there were no relapses into sin, few children of the Church would lose their souls. For where is the Catholic, who, having had the misfortune of falling into mortal sin, has not, at least once, confessed with the intention and purpose of sinning no more? But Satan endeavors to destroy the good which the Lord works in the heart of the sinner by confession, and if he succeed again in forcing an entrance into that heart, it will be difficult indeed to dislodge him.

In that case, as Christ himself both assures and warns us, the last state will be worse than the first. Why?

Let us consider this question to-day.

O Mary, thou faithful Virgin, refuge of sinners, protect us by thy prayers, in order that reconciled to God, we may not relapse and thus sink the deeper into the abyss of hell!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The evil spirit driven out of a house, which had opened its doors to him withdraws, as Christ says, into the wilderness; which means that when the sinner has returned to God, the tempter is careful not to approach him immediately. He has cause to fear that

the newly converted man will, in his first zeal, withstand and repulse his temptations.

He bides his time, and after the first fervor of penitential zeal has cooled, he tries again; and should he succeed, then the second state of the sinner is worse than the first. The reasons for this are obvious:

First, the sinner's guilt is *greater*, because he committed the sin with a clearer knowledge of its malice, and with a greater abuse of divine grace. It is true there are some people who live wickedly from day to day, and who commit sin with so little concern, that the words of Christ: "Father, they know not what they do," seem particularly applicable to them; but with these the sinner who once did penance and again relapsed, can not be classed. It is deliberate and forewarned opposition to God that makes a sin particularly odious and culpable. Hence, the rebellion of the angels was so grievous an offense in the eyes of God, that not one was offered time for repentance; for they opposed His will with full knowledge and consent. It is this same malice that, more or less, brands the relapse of a sinner.

If a person offends us once, but soon after shows signs of repentance, we easily condone the injury, even though it be great. But if the offense be again and again repeated, and if the transgressor manifest utter contempt for our feelings, we are far more sensible of the injury, and much less inclined to receive him again into our friendship, even though we do not hate him. We mistrust such an individual.

Secondly; These relapses open the door to levity, and the sinner becomes gradually *insensible* to the reproaches of his conscience and to the admonitions of that penitential spirit, by which, in the beginning, he was moved. Even the threats of divine judgment and the terrors of eternal punishment do not touch him. He endeavors to excuse himself.

What a dangerous state this is, especially when is joined with it the awful abuse of the Sacrament of Penance, and when a man, after changing this spiritual medicine into a deadly poison of the soul, quiets his conscience by saying: I have confessed that sin!

What is confession without true contrition and repentance? what is repentance without an earnest resolution of amendment? and of what avail, in the end, are good resolutions, if they are not put into execution? Confessions without true sorrow for sin or without firm purposes of amendment are, at best, delusions. St. Chrysostom calls them plays, in which actors pretend to be struck and fall down, but as soon as the curtain drops, get up and depart. St. Augustine calls them mock confessions.

The relapsing sinner, seeking to excuse himself, says: Men are weak, and God is good. This is certainly true, but not in the sense in which the sinner applies it to himself.

Man is weak in regard to venial sins and slight defections; but with the aid of divine grace he is strong and invincible where mortal sins are concerned, especially those mortal sins, which easily become habit-

ual, as, for instance: impurity, intemperance, enmity, and cursing.

The nullity of the excuse, that man is weak, becomes especially obvious from one fact which every relapsing sinner must admit to be decisive and convincing, namely: had he been persuaded that a relapse into his former sin would result, owing to his peculiar constitution, in complete blindness; had he been convinced, by the sad experience of others, that escape was impossible; had his physicians predicted the same inevitable fate if he disregarded nature's laws; he would, whatever temptation might have assailed him, have avoided that sin.

Is this not sufficient evidence that man is strong enough to conquer every temptation to mortal sin, if his faith be really strong, and if he only has the will to co-operate with divine grace?

Thirdly: The condition of such a sinner is very dangerous, because his relapse makes him despondent, should he feel an inclination to repent.

Satan desires to discourage him, and whispers into his ear that it is useless for him to think of conversion, for he has before now endeavored to cast off the yoke, but in vain.

In this case the sinner endeavors to persuade himself that it would be impossible to free himself entirely from this or that sin, and so delays his conversion from day to day, from week to week, from year to year, and finally falls into that depth of which the Holy Ghost says: "The wicked man when he is come into the depth

of sins, contemneth." Yes, he contemneth at last the means of salvation, communication with God, holy Mass, the Church, the Sacraments, even heaven, until his soul finally becomes a prey to despair. What an awful condition!

And what means must we use in order to avoid this state? The last words of to-day's Gospel answer this question: "Blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it." That is to say, we must meditate upon what the word of God says of this state, and be penetrated with a holy fear. It is not a priest, a confessor, a human being who has uttered these words, but it is Christ, the Lord Himself, who likewise warns us: "And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

If we be lastingly penetrated with the fear of such an evil, such a misfortune, we shall attend also to what this same word of God teaches us concerning the means of avoiding in future all those temptations which threaten us with a relapse. We shall especially heed the admonition of the Lord: "If thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out; if thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off," which means that, should any thing whatever lead us into sin, though it be as dear to us as our eye or our hand, we must not hesitate to avoid it on all occasions.

But while doing this, you must *watch* and *pray* as Christ tells us. The tempter may seize other occasions, perhaps even more dangerous, to tempt you. Pray! pray! unite yourself to God by morning and evening

prayers. Walk in His presence, receive frequently the blessed Sacrament, clothe yourself in the armor of God, as the Apostle exhorts you; put on the girdle of truth, the breastplate of justice; put on your feet the preparation of the Gospel; seize the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit, and repeat in your heart at the moment of temptation the most holy Name of Jesus. Do this, and you will be preserved from relapses into sin! Amen!

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

FIRST SERMON.

"And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them."—John 6.

IN to-day's Gospel all are admonished to strengthen, particularly, that disposition of the heart which exercises, in a special manner, a beneficial influence over our life in the service of God, namely, our trust in His providence. There are so many trials in this world for both body and soul! So many evils, so many maladies and dangers threatening the health and life of man! How great, how urgent, frequently, are the cares for our daily existence! And if this is true of the body, what shall we say of the dangers to which the soul is exposed on the way of salvation?

Hence, how important it is for us to strengthen our trust in the providence of the Almighty.

We shall consider, to-day, one by one, the motives for doing this.

O Mary, thou who art next to God, our most consoling refuge and trust, strengthen in our hearts this confidence in God, that we may be aided by Him in every need!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

That confidence in the providence of God is a most important disposition of the mind, is evident from what I have said in the introduction about the many needs of both body and soul.

Accordingly, Christ reminds us often and emphatically of this confidence, and exhorts us to cultivate it. The same is done by the Apostles. St. Peter, especially, admonishes us earnestly to place ourselves, like children, in God's fatherly arms, and cast all our care upon Him. How readily would we obey this admonition of Christ and His Apostles, were we to consider Who God is, what He has done for us and for the world, were we to reflect on the lofty destiny for which He has created us, and the protection He has promised, if we place our trust in Him!

To strengthen, then, your trust in the providence of God, ponder first: *Who God is.* We place our confidence in another in proportion as we feel convinced that he understands what we need, and that he has it in his power to do for us whatever our safety requires. Again, this confidence we grant cheerfully and unreservedly if we know that our protector has the will to assist us, that he loves us, and that his relations towards us are such that we have a right to expect from him this aid; particularly, if he has promised to help us, and has already given us proofs of his readiness to keep his word.

Who does not see at a glance, after what has been said, how *just* and *well-founded* is our trust in God, and His providence, and how firm our hope should be in the help of God under every hardship of life? God *knows* what we need; He is omniscient; every thing, says St. Paul, lies unfolded before Him like an open book. He knows the needs of our body and soul much better than we do ourselves. Let us trust in Him.

He is almighty; He *can help* us. It is He who, as Creator, called heaven and earth into existence, and who governs and preserves them.

Has He the *will* to help us? Who can doubt it? Is He not infinite goodness, and at the same time our Creator and *Father?*

What splendid, what numerous proofs of the providence of God as Creator and Ruler of the world, surround us! What harmony, order and consistency we perceive in the entire visible creation, if we let our eyes wander from this earth to the far off starry hosts! For thousands of years the sun has risen and gone down never a second too early or too late. Child of man! does not the first ray of the sun say to you: There is a Providence? here am I again! Confide, trust!

But as the ancient philosopher Plato has said, the care of Providence appears to us more astounding in the smallest plant and animal which God's omnipotence has called into existence, than in the magnificent heavenly bodies and their wonderful movements.

Does not Christ Himself point to this when He emphatically says: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them? Are not you of much more value than they?"—"And if the grass of the field, which is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith!" (Matt. 6, 26, 30).

How earnest should be our endeavor to strengthen our trust in God, when we think of the being He gave us; a being that reflects His likeness and surpasses in perfection all visible creatures! And for what end has He created us? Answer: For Himself, that we may one day become "like unto Him," for His and our own glorification.

But what must our feelings be, when we think of the price He paid for us, when through sin, we were threatened with destruction? Did He not clothe Himself with our nature, live for our sake a life of infinite merit, and consummate the work of Redemption in excruciating sufferings and a bitter death?

Therefore, child of man, likeness of God, redeemed soul—have confidence! God will save you; He will help you.

Our trust in God will be still more strengthened, if we reflect upon the manner in which He bestowed upon us His infinite merits. He could not have granted them with greater liberality, did He come into the world to save each one of us alone. For us especially,

the children of His holy Church, He has opened wide all the fountains of divine grace, and left abundant means unto salvation.

Each one knows how often Providence has protected him personally in many dangers of body and soul.

Who can think of all this, and not throw himself, with all the trust of Christian hope, into the fatherly arms of God?

This is not only a just, but at the same time a *noble* and *meritorious* act.

I say noble, for this trust marks the difference between the children of God and the children of the world. The latter are filled with care only to secure by industry their own and their children's temporal welfare; and when misfortunes assail them, they think not of God, but seek help from man, as if man could aid them without the will of the Almighty. And if men help us, from whom do they receive the power to do so but from God?

It is unfortunate that men, even Christians, think of this so seldom, but ever run for aid to human beings, sometimes even doing, or allowing others to do, for their alleviation, things which offend God. Thus act, especially, those Catholics who, merely to gain assistance in time of need, scruple not to join secret societies, which, for important reasons, are condemned by the Church.

What an admonition, a warning to us, especially in these times, and this country, to beware of being

drawn into the nets of secret societies, and of being thus excluded from the spiritual consolations of holy Communion, not only during life, but also at the hour of death!

Confidence in God is also a particularly holy and *meritorious* act, because it includes so many other acts of virtue, namely, the recognition of the sovereignity of God over all His creatures and the entire world, His omnipotence, power, goodness, truth, fidelity and love. It is, therefore, an act which especially honors and pleases God, and to which He has promised His special protection: "Because he hoped in Me, I will deliver him, I will protect him," is the promise made by God in the Psalms. It is an act which fully expresses the confession and longing of the pious soul: All for the greater glory of God, even my trials and my sorrows.

We have seen in the lives of many of the saints how successfully this disposition of mind will aid us to do great deeds in the service of God.

Although poor, unknown, persecuted, how many great deeds they undertook and completed for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! Why? Knowing well their own capacity, they were humble and acknowledged themselves worthless, incompetent servants, but their trust was in God; hence their grand plans and their perfection, and hence their strength and perseverance. Trust in God, was their support.

Finally, how *consoling*, how sweet an act to place

ourselves like children in the arms of our Father, and look confidingly up to Him in the storms of life. It is a foretaste of the peace, the eternal rest that the blessed enjoy in the contemplation of God!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And a great multitude followed Him."—John 6.

THE people followed Jesus into the wilderness, because they were desirous of hearing Him. Their bodies hungered, but their souls were so refreshed, so delighted with the word He spoke, that they forgot their corporal needs, and Christ, to recompense their zeal, wrought a miracle.

What an example for us, to hear attentively the Word of God, and draw from it fruit for the benefit of our souls! Unfortunately, the wondrous fruits of the spoken word of God are not to be found in the great majority of Christian people. And why? The words of to-day's Gospel, if carefully considered, will answer this question.

Were the dispositions of the children of the Church like those of the five thousand people who followed Christ into the wilderness, the Word of God would bring forth abundant fruit for the salvation of all.

O Mary, thou who didst gain from the words of thy divine Son such wondrous benefits, pray for us that we also may henceforth draw abundant fruit therefrom for our soul's salvation!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Five thousand men followed Christ into the wilder-

ness to hear Him speak. How great must their desire have been to understand His doctrine! It caused them to disregard the necessaries of life; they did not even think of providing food.

What a salutary lesson for those Christians, who frivolously neglect to hear the word of God from those of whom Christ has said: "Those who hear you, hear me!" The desire to hear the Word of God is fearfully wanting in many Christians. Are there only a few who the whole year long listen not to a single sermon? who think they are doing wonders if they assist at Mass every Sunday? Is it surprising that they lead an indifferent life, or even follow the ways of evil without concern? How can it be otherwise? During the entire year they hear not a word of advice or instruction regarding those duties, which, as children of the Church, they must fulfill, if they would lead a good and holy life.

They live from year to year unconcernedly in the occasions of sin. And why? Because no one reproves them or shows to them the dangers which threaten their souls. They live in sin, because no one pictures to them frequently and touchingly the wickedness, the misfortune, the guilt of sin.

It does not enter their thoughts to walk in the path of righteousness, or to live a holy life, because no one reminds them of their obligations, and because they have before their eyes only the example of other indifferent Christians.

How different would the case be, if they heard the

Word of God every Sunday with a well disposed heart! But this assistance they fail to secure.

The radical fault lies in the slight esteem they have for the Word of God. Hence, even if they do hear a sermon, they devote their attention to the style and delivery of the speaker, and listen to him more as a man and lecturer, than as a priest and preacher. St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, gives thanks to God that they had received his word "not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the Word of God, Who worketh in you that have believed." Will God work in those who listen to the divine Word as the word of men?

The priest speaks in the name of God. It is the Lord who addresses us, when by His commission the preacher expounds the teachings and precepts of the Church.

St. Teresa one day saw our Lord Himself standing at the side of a priest in the pulpit softly whispering into his ear what he was preaching to the people. How attentively must not the saint have listened to every word which came from the lips of that priest! How carefully would you not listen to this sermon, were you to see beside me Christ suggesting to me all that I am saying! And yet, whenever a priest of the Church preaches the Gospel and expounds it according to the interpretation of the Fathers and of holy Mother Church, it is really Christ that speaks to us. Has he not declared emphatically: "He that hears you hears Me?"

Do not therefore say: "I am not interested in what

the preacher says; I know it already, and perhaps just as well as he." You forget that divine grace accompanies the word of the priest as minister of the Lord, which is not the case when he who addresses you is not a priest, or not possessed of divine mission.

Hence the frequent astonishing conversions of repentant sinners, who have assisted at a sermon which convinced or moved them, although the sermon, perhaps told them nothing new, nothing that they had not heard before.

Divine grace, which accompanied the words of the priest, accomplished the deed. Therefore I say, if we do not profit by sermons, it is because we lack that hunger and thirst for the Word of God, which a proper esteem for it is calculated to produce.

There are many, however, who though they feel the need and good of a sermon, yet always fail to hear one, and always find numberless excuses to justify their conduct. They say: I have not the time, my business prevents me. I live properly, and know what the duties of a Christian are. I answered these excuses when I spoke on the nature, worth, and divine influence of the Word of God. I will now merely say, in regard to time, that he who wills can do much, often can do whatsoever he wills. Moreover we should remember that we can expect no blessing even in this world, if, neglecting to speak to God in prayer, and to listen to His sacred Word, we desecrate the Lord's day by servile work, business transactions, or frivolous intercourse with others.

Our Lord says: "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Those, however, who live frivolously and who care not to hear the Word of God, heed not this admonition.

The Church possesses no attraction for such people, and they only visit it to fulfill, outwardly, their duties as Christians. Even if they sometimes do hear a sermon they take it not to heart, and find in it no *food for the soul.* And yet the Word of God is the Manna which, as the Holy Ghost says, contains all sweetness, and which, if we properly meditate upon it, will allay the hunger of our soul.

A man who desires ardently his salvation ought naturally to hunger and thirst after a more complete knowledge of the science which will secure it for him. Listen to sermons! They will teach you this science. The word of God will enlighten you.

He who seeks in truth his salvation, desires strength to live in accordance with the recognized will of God. Listen to sermons! The Word of God will animate and strengthen you, by untold motives, to fulfill your duties and lead a holy life.

The heart of man hungers and thirsts after good advice, and guidance to escape the evils or to cure the diseases of his soul. Listen to sermons! The Word of God offers you these means; make use of them, and your soul will be benefited.

Man here upon earth, longs for consolation in sor-

row and suffering; hear the Word of God! It will comfort, it will refresh you.

A heart sighing after holiness, desires to receive the graces necessary to this end. Listen to the Word of God coming from on high! Meditate in union with the people of to-day's Gospel, that is: with grateful love for Jesus, reflect on the Word of God, and the Lord will satisfy the hunger of your soul, bestow upon you light, comfort, and strength in His service! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And this He said to try him; for He Himself knew what he would do."—John 6.

"WHENCE shall we buy bread that these may eat?" Christ asked Philip. He questioned him thus to try him. He—Jesus—knew that by a miracle He would feed those who, in order to hear His Word, had so zealously followed Him.

That which Christ did in to-day's Gospel is repeated by divine Providence unceasingly in the life of man. Men so often know not what they do, and so little accustom themselves to yield submissively to the decrees of Providence! Were it otherwise, how willingly would God do great and wonderful things in us!

I say: Only too often you know not what you are doing, no matter how clever you deem yourself; but God always knows what He does. Hence yield yourself to His guidance.

O Mary, thou who didst stand silent beneath the cross, obtain for us that we may submit as perfectly as thou didst to the divine, though trying, decrees of Providence!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Father, they know not what they do!" Indeed, most men know not what they do. They neither un-

derstand nor reflect on the ways of God, nor allow themselves to be guided by His fatherly hand. They wish the Lord to follow whither they lead, and to do as they wish, because they imagine it will promote their happiness, while only too often it proves to be the cause of their misfortune and ruin.

This is the case, first, with all those who are foolish enough to seek the gratification of their wishes where it can not be found, but where, on the contrary, they meet the reverse.

Man, who is created for happiness, seeks to satisfy the inclinations of his nature. He desires worldly goods, honors and pleasures, and these for the longest possible period. God, however, has not created him for these, but for Himself, for His glory; and this, for all eternity, but under the one condition that we serve Him.

The sinner seeks the gratification of his natural inclinations for riches, honors and pleasures; but where and how does he seek it? In creatures, and by the transgression of God's laws. Oh, fatal delusion; for what are all earthly possessions? Dust! What is all earthly honor? Vapor! What is all worldly pleasure? Delusion! What is the longest age? Scarcely a moment, if compared with eternity!

Besides, how true and undeniable is the assurance of Holy Writ, that each one will be punished in that wherein he offended! The proud suffer humiliation; the avaricious, imaginary need; the passionate, wrongs;

the envious, losses; the impure, great bodily torments; the intemperate, thirst; the indolent, hardships.

And, notwithstanding this, such men think that they act wisely, and consider the ways of the virtuous foolish, because these do not allow themselves every enjoyment, but turn their eyes from time to eternity, and bestow all their care upon the latter.

"Father, they know not what they do!" But Jesus *knoweth what He does* when He afflicts these worldly, sinful children of His Church with misfortune, when He throws obstacles in their evil path, and thus calls, admonishes and urges them to repentance.

When the Lord in this manner designs to seek men they ought to be most grateful; for then there is hope that they will return to the path of salvation. No more terrible judgment can befall the sinner than when God allows him to walk unpunished the road to destruction, and recompenses the good moral qualities, which he may still possess, with temporal goods, for then nothing awaits him in the other world save the endless punishment of sin.

But not only to sinners, but also to those who, though they fear God, and keep His commandments, still lead in the world the life of lukewarm and tepid Christians, are the words of God addressed: "They know not what they do," nor what they desire. God, however, knows why He sends this or that calamity, if Christians do not, who, in their ignorance, endeavor to resist or avoid the dispensations of Providence.

The evil sometimes goes still further. Even among

good Christians there are unfortunately many who, finding the ways of God incomprehensible, dare even to criticise them in their own mind, or in the presence of their intimate friends, and who, refusing to put themselves entirely in God's hands, never draw, for the sanctification of their souls, the full benefit from the sacred dispensations of divine Providence.

Why are these miserable and deluded persons so obstinate, so unyielding? I answer: Because they judge the ways of God as they appear to them; they are not sufficiently penetrated with the light of holy faith, and do yield to their self-conceit.

It is not without reason that Jesus exhorts us "not to judge according to the appearance." It may happen, and, in fact, not seldom does happen, that pious and zealous souls make plans, and are confused and embarrassed when, on the point of carrying them out, they find that these plans have been thwarted and rendered futile. God allows this; but men do not know it, and can not comprehend why He permits it. Why? Because they do not really know men as they are; but God knows them.

They do not know themselves, or how they stand in the sight of God. Not so, however, Jesus. He knows how weak they are, and that, if they began the work, they would leave it unfinished, and abandon it, which would be worse than not to have begun it at all.

They can not read the heart of men. Not so, however, Jesus. He knows what He does. He knows

that those very persons who now seem favorably disposed towards them, would afterwards oppose their work, and destroy it. They do not know that a good deed done now may prevent the execution of a better work later.

Finally.—They do not consider that God has no need of us to lead souls to their destination, and that frequently He only bestows upon us the merit of our good intentions. "Lord, Thou hast no need of my works," says the Psalmist. Oh, how beneficial to every soul would it be if she made a similar confession! Then the arm of God would not be shortened; for, seeing us perfectly willing to let Him act for us, and to leave to Him the results of all our labors, whatever their importance, He would be most ready to multiply the loaves of bread—that is, to increase His graces and blessings, because we would then be working only for His honor and glory, and not for our own self-love and vanity.

If we are thus disposed, if we act in this manner, then will those, who are Christians only in name, be induced to say, when they consider our life: We can not understand how people can live thus; how they can care so little for worldly goods, so little for amusement, honor, and the approbation of men; and, withal, be so lavish in providing for the needy, in seeking, at so much trouble and division, for the well-being of others. How can they despise the world, and seem to find heaven upon earth in union with Jesus, especially in the Most Holy Sacrament? They do not under-

stand this; they do not know it. But those who live thus know why, and they can say, with David: "I believe, therefore do I speak thus."

I believe, I trust in Jesus, therefore I live thus, and in joy and sorrow exclaim: Jesus, in life and in death, I am thine! Amen!

PASSION SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

"Which of you shall convince Me of sin?"—John 8.

"WHICH of you shall convince Me of sin?" Thus Jesus could ask and challenge His enemies. It is the aim of our life to follow Jesus as closely as possible, to think, to feel, to speak, to act as He has done. If we do this, then we also as true followers of the Lord have the right to ask: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"

As without a special grace and favor of God we can not remain entirely free from imperfections and venial sins, we ought to endeavor that our weaknesses be such as not to give scandal or bad example to others, but known only to ourselves, cause us to be humble before God.

This observation gives us an opportunity of earnestly examining ourselves in this regard, and we will make use of this hour to recognize:

What little right we had until now to challenge and ask those with whom we live: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?"

Alas! too many could convince us. Why? I will endeavor to explain this to you to-day.

O Mary, thou mirror of divine justice, on whom there is not to be found a vestige or shadow of sin, grant that we may recognize wherein we have failed, and that we may cleanse ourselves more and more perfectly from every stain of sin!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Christians, who are now listening to me, do you dare thus to challenge your enemies?

Look upon the long list of mortal sins you have committed; who knows how often your conscience has said to you: Sinner, beat your breast and cry: God be merciful unto me a sinner!

But what your conscience says in secret is not the most important.—How much scandal have you not given to others by your evil actions?

To prove this I need only look in succession upon your principal sins and their sources: Ask your own conscience,—it, too, will convict you.

Vain, proud Christian! have you a right to ask: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Ask yourself, and your conscience will reply; ask others, and they will answer. Oh, how you are filled with self-love, how you over-esteem yourself and despise others! How easily your self-love is wounded—as those only too well know with whom you associate! You always persist in your own opinion, and offend others because they will not flatter your self-love and pride.

Is it not so? Oh, you know it well, and others know it, too, and are scandalized at you and your bad example.—Beat repentantly your breast and say: God be merciful to me, a poor sinner!

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Can you ask this, avaricious Christian? Oh, how greedily you hunt for temporal profit! how you sacrifice all your strength to it, and neglect those duties which piety demands of you, your morning and evening prayers, thoughts of God during the day, the sanctification of holy days! You corrupt others by your bad example, and induce them to live in the same manner. Oh, how many sins you are guilty of through your love of money, through your covetousness! how often is it not the cause that you sin against brotherly love! Ask others and they will tell you. Therefore, beat your breast and say: God be merciful to me, a poor sinner!

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Dare you ask this, passionate and wrathful Christian? Ask your own conscience, it will answer you. Oh, how irritable, how impatient you always are; you fly into a passion at the slightest provocation from your neighbor, you scandalize him, and thus make yourself guilty of the sins of others! Do you excuse yourself, and say that you are not aware of your passionate temper? Ask those who live with you, and they will tell you how they are tormented by your impatience and irritability, and how they are often tempted by it to commit the same sin. Ask your wife, your children, your

servants and associate-laborers. Does ever a day pass in which you do not sin by impatience? Beat your breast and say: God be merciful to me, a poor sinner.

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Can you ask this, O Christian, who art the slave of envy? Reflect and ask yourself how often you have envied the fortune, merits, talents and works of your neighbor, while you regarded him with secret, malignant joy when he failed in some attempt! Shame on you!

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Intemperate Christian—drunkard, dare you ask it? If intemperance has robbed you of the use of your senses, if it has weakened your memory, then ask those who have seen you intoxicated, how much scandal you have given, to how many occasions of sin you have exposed yourself and others when in that state? To how many family contentions your intemperance has given rise!—how often it has been the cause of your neglecting the duties of your state! to how many sins, such as anger, cursing, impurity in word, thought and action it has led you! Repent! Beat your breast and say: God be merciful to me, a poor sinner!

"Which of you shall convince me of sin?" Have you a right to ask this question, idle, sluggish Christian? Morning and evening prayers unsaid;—duties unperformed; education of children neglected; good examples omitted;—your children's reproof and correction neglected! Oh, how they all accuse you!

And if your own conscience reproaches you thus,

how will you feel when you look upon those whom you have scandalized, and whom you have corrupted by your sins?

Has not Christ Himself said: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!"

Man may disregard the scandal he gives in life, he may consider it lightly, and hardly accuse himself of it in the confessional, as is mostly the case, but the fearful day of judgment will come, when man to his terror will hear those accuse him, to whom he was the first occasion of committing mortal sins, who perhaps, after that, continued to live in these sins, and perverted others, who again perverted others, and so on until the end of time. Woe to him when the one whom he corrupted steps forward to the judgment-seat of God with the accusation: Here is the one who robbed me of the grace of God, who led me upon the path of evil, the one through whom I have lost heaven, merited hell, and through whom I am now lost for ever!

Then the eyes of the sinner will be opened, and he will be surprised to see that others who had not the good fortune of being Catholics led a better life than he, and were less guilty of the sins of others.

Although this concerns all, yet especially does it refer to those whose station in life imposes upon them

the duty of leading others upon the path of virtue, as parents in regard to their children.

Oh how fearful for them when, upon the last day, these neglected, scandalized, sinful, lost children hold up to them all the sins of which they have been guilty and by which they have caused the ruin of their unfortunate offspring! So those who through enmity, intemperance or unchastity have given scandal and induced others to follow a life of sin to their eternal damnation!

If your conscience accuses you, confess with sorrow, redress the evil as best you can, and endeavor to live henceforth in such a manner that the word of the Apostle may be verified in you: "We are the good odor of Christ unto God in them that are saved" (2 Cor. 2, 15).—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Do we not say well that thou hast a devil?"—John 8.

WHEN we hear of a man being possessed by a devil, we are horrified, especially when we think of the possibility of such a thing occurring to us. And yet this is not the worst thing that could happen to man. We read of saints who begged God to permit their bodies to fall into the hands of Satan that they might become an object of contempt to others, as happened a holy nun who lived in a convent in Italy.

One hears, however, but seldom of people possessed, particularly in these days. Satan is wise, and would not undo what he has succeeded so well in accomplishing and which serves his purpose better. He has succeeded in making many even of those who call themselves Christians no longer believe that he exists. There is nothing more advantageous for the enemy about to make an attack than when his adversary believes him not to be near. Satan then has the advantage, and if man falls into sin, he takes possession of his soul, and if the sin becomes a habit he remains there. Let us consider to-day:

The difficulty of driving out the devil of habit. The habitual sinner voluntarily holds him fast.

O Mary! thou who didst vanquish hell, assist us that we may crush the serpent's head, and drive from our hearts the demons of habitual sins.

I speak in the most blessed name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

There are few in our days who are bodily possessed by the devil, but how many, alas! of whom it can be said, that Satan has made his abode in their hearts, through the habitual sins which reign there supreme.

To acknowledge this we need only glance at the different sins, especially at those which easily become habitual, and which of their nature are mortal sins.

All Christians know that the virtue of humility is indispensable to one who wishes to serve God, as it is the foundation of all other virtues, and at the same time their consummation and security. They know that all our thoughts, desires, words and works must be penetrated with the fragrance of this virtue, if Christ is to dwell within us—and yet how little of this virtue we see in life! How many of those who call themselves Christians think only of their own aggrandizement? All their thoughts, wishes, words and works are directed to this end. This depraved disposition carries numberless sins in its train, such as: disobedience, vanity, vainglory, despotism, cruelty towards dependents, envy, contention, and *heresy*.

Wherein lies the cause? I answer: They are possessed by the devil of pride.

Every Christian knows that Christ has said: Blessed are the poor! Woe to those who are rich! God has given gold and riches to men that they may aid others, and lay up riches for heaven by giving alms, and by

assisting, when they have an opportunity, to extend the Kingdom of God upon earth, by taking care of churches, schools, and other charitable institutions.

Such a person has plenty of means to live on, even did he gain no more during his life. One is disposed to think that, under these circumstances, his conduct must be that of a good Christian. But it is not. He does not take time to say his morning or evening prayers. He does not hear Mass during the week, does not think once, during the entire day, of God, but only of his business, of his gains and losses. He is not interested in the spiritual welfare of others, and does less even than a poor man for churches and schools. Not only this, but in his thirst for gain he becomes guilty of fraud, usury, perjury and injustice. There have been men who, for the sake of money, sold themselves to the devil.

The demon of gold is in their hearts, and they are possessed by him.

Such a Christian is well acquainted with the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." As a member of Christ's Church he should live according to the maxim: I will help you as I would help myself." But no, he not only does not help those who are unfortunate — he even feels a secret malignant joy. He does not like others to do well, to grow in honor and distinction. On the contrary, on every occasion he transgresses, by slandering, the commandment which was given us, to love our neighbor. And why? I say: The devil of envy has taken possession of his heart.

Another Christian has been taught that if he does not forgive, God will not forgive him, and yet he lives from year to year, in hatred and enmity toward others, commits acts of violence and injustice, sins by cursing and blaspheming. Why? The devil of anger has entered his heart, and made therein his dwelling.

Such a Christian knows the greatness of the crime of unchastity. He knows it is a mortal sin, and yet far from avoiding temptations, he opens to them the door of his imagination and of his heart. He seeks temptation and remains in it. All his confessions are illusions. Why? The devil of unchastity has taken possession of his heart.

This Christian knows full well how the vice of gluttony and intemperance dishonors man, how it renders him unhappy both in this life and the next, and yet he remains, until old age, a slave to it. Even with death upon him he can not free himself from its degradation. The devil of intemperance has taken possession of him and clings tenaciously to him.

Finally, others in the same manner are possessed by the devil of indolence. One would suppose that sinners, who after many years of sin reconcile themselves to God, would be all zeal in order to redeem what they lost by their former lukewarmness. And yet how little of this zeal do we see in the greater number of penitents!

Christian, you who have listened to me, ask yourself: Have any of these evil spirits taken possession of my heart? And should your conscience reproach you, ask

yourself what means you must employ to drive far away the devil which dwells within you.

I answer: If you wish to expel all these evil spirits from your heart, and drive them forth in such a manner that they will not return, make a worthy confession. A good confession is alone able to drive away the evil spirits which have taken up their abode in your heart. And to make sure that they do not return and cling still closer to you, think earnestly on the horrible nature of the above-named vices, and meditate well on their consequences even in this world.

Consider in the light of faith, as the Word of God represents it to us, the enormity of sin. Christ says: "He that is of God, heareth the words of God." Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. Most habitual sinners, those in whose heart Satan has made his dwelling, never hear the Word of God, or they hear it but do not heed it; consequently they are not of God, but of their father the devil.

Our horror of sin increases especially, however, when we look upon Christ in whose life and character we see so clear a reflex of all virtues, and meditating upon them we admire their beauty and see more clearly the ugliness of the contrary vices. There is, however, one thing which will effectually expel Satan from our heart, and that is the presence of Jesus, the Conqueror of death and hell. There is no concord between Christ and Belial, between Light and Darkness.

If the mere sign of the cross is a weapon before which Satan retreats terrified, how much more easily

can not Christ Himself, present with us upon our altars, put him to flight, especially when, in holy communion, He enters into our hearts. Hence:

Go to Him. Visit the Blessed Sacrament. Receive Him frequently in holy Communion. Consider the virtues which this sacramental life places so prominently before your eyes. This intercourse with Jesus, this union with Him, will expel Satan from your heart, and prevent his return therein. Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"You have dishonored me."—John 8.

IF there is any thing that violates fraternal charity it is the sin referred to in to-day's Gospel, namely, that of maligning or injuring the honor of our neighbor by telling, either in his presence or behind his back, the evil of which you think him to be guilty.

The Jews dared to say to Christ: "Do we not say well that Thou hast a devil?" What they here said to His face, they in all probability repeated behind His back. Yet they believed themselves to be in the right, and to be acting from zeal for God. What blindness!

Let us therefore consider to-day how we must conduct ourselves in order not to sin by slandering our neighbor, and how we in turn must act if calumniated.

O Mary, thou who beneath the cross wast an object of reproach to the murderers of thy Son, pray that we may receive the grace not to sin by judging rashly or slandering our neighbor, and to be patient when others calumniate us!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

As I said before: Let us consider to-day how we must conduct ourselves in order not to sin by suspecting and calumniating others. The subject touches one

of the most important phases of our existence—that of social position.

We are so continually thrown in communication with others by business relations, or other circumstances, and hear so much, that we may be easily tempted, through unfavorable impressions received, to become suspicious, and form a wrong judgment of the actions of our neighbors.

The fact that appearances are so often deceptive, and that those circumstances which we were tempted to think distinctly proved the evil, both we and others suspected, so often mislead, should prevent us from judging others.

It is certainly allowable for us to place ourselves in security in case our neighbor proves what he appears to be; but we must refrain from pronouncing judgment against him as long as there is the slightest doubt.

Blessed are those who are so disposed, that even when they are convinced of the truth, yet refrain from judging, in recollection of the words of the Lord: "Judge not before the time (1 Cor. iv, 5); judge not according to the appearance" (John vii, 24), and again: "Judge not, that you may not be judged" (Matt. vii, 1).

Keep before your eyes through life this threefold: "Do not judge" of Christ, and act according to it.

The cultivation of this spirit is the more important because suspicion leads so easily to slander—a vice through which, as is rightly said, even souls otherwise pious are led to commit many sins.

Hence, as far as it is possible, follow the advice of St. Ignatius, and excuse your neighbor to yourself, and to others; and, if you can not excuse the deed, at least excuse the intention.

There are many people who really believe that we are permitted to speak at all times of the real faults of others. Such people are not sufficiently instructed, and do not understand the difference between defamation and calumny.

To speak of sins which we know they never committed is called calumny. This is never permitted, and there are only three circumstances which give us the right to speak of the real faults of others, namely:

First.—If it be our intention to correct those who err.

Secondly.—If we desire to warn them against temptation; or,

Thirdly.—To defend ourself in a just manner.

As to yourself, if unjustly reproached or slandered, regulate your life according to the following principles:

First.—Do not be astonished if you have to suffer what the most holy men, yes, what even Christ our Lord, suffered. "The disciple is not above his Master." How often had the saints to endure injuries and insults even from those from whom they had the least right to expect them!

Gregory the Great has justly said:

"What good is it to us when men praise us, if our own conscience accuses us? But why should we grieve when men accuse us, if our own conscience acquits us?"

Hence say with St. Augustine and the seraphic St.

Francis: "What matters it if men accuse us? He who judges us is God."

It would, on the contrary, be a very doubtful sign, were the whole world to applaud us, and we had nothing to suffer from slander, suspicion and malicious judgments. Real worth in the eyes of God must be stamped with the sign of the holy cross—a sign destined to be contradicted. Wasps sting only sweet and ripe fruit; were there no wasps of slander to prick our works, the sign that they are ripe and pleasing to God would be wanting. To defend ourselves, however, in a modest way, against our calumniators, is certainly allowable, as Christ Himself gives us, in to-day's gospel, the example.

This must not, however, be done in an excited manner; but in a way which shows that we give testimony to the truth, because the honor of God demands it, and the welfare of souls renders it just. If, however, we perceive that our defense is not accepted, then let us follow the advice of St. Chrysostom, and be silent, as Christ has taught us by His silence before Pilate and Herod.

When others speak in your presence about your neighbor, and duty does not compel you to listen to them, either cause them to be silent, or show by your manner that you dislike their conversation. Do not express surprise, nor ask questions, lest you add fuel to the fire.

The Holy Ghost says: "The north wind driveth away rain, as doth a sad countenance a backbiting

tongue" (Prov. xxv, 23). And a learned man said rightly: "If there were no obliging listeners, there would be no slanderers."

"Blessed," says Holy Writ, "is he that hath not slipped with his tongue" (Eccl. xxv, 11). Numberless sins are committed with the tongue; but none so frequently as this sin of speaking ill of others, for the reason that one finds so many occasions to indulge in it, and also, because it appears less sinful than other sins of the tongue, such as cursing, blaspheming, lewd speeches, etc. Nay, it sometimes even seems that zeal for a virtuous, pious life obliges us to express our disapproval of the actions of others. Therefore, blessed, thrice blessed, those who have never been guilty of speaking evil of others, who prefer to praise rather than blame their neighbor, and who bear with sweetness and patience when others slander them. Let this never be effaced from your memory! Amen!

LOW SUNDAY.

FIRST SERMON.

"Peace be to you!"—John 20.

"PEACE be to you!" With these words Jesus greeted His disciples when, entering through closed doors, He suddenly stood in their midst. The circumstance that the doors were locked is an evidence of the fear and sorrow which filled their hearts. They were tossed by the storm of persecution which had broken upon them, and deprived them of the presence of the Lord.

What confidence, therefore, must have filled their hearts, when the Lord stood once more alive in their midst, and brought with Him the peace they had lost.

No doubt, each one of us wishes, that he too had been with the Apostles, and heard from the mouth of Jesus that greeting of peace.

But why should we envy them? Behind the closed doors of the tabernacle, in every place where the Holy Eucharist is kept, our Lord and Saviour is to be found. And every soul that approaches Him with love and faith hears that same greeting: "*Pax vobis!*" Happy are we, if we listen to it and treasure it up in our hearts!

The peace which Christ wishes us—which He gives us—is true, complete, holy, and imparts sanctity and beauty to our souls.

Let us consider it to-day, and endeavor to receive it in all its fullness. It will be our most precious Easter-gift.

O Mary, Mother of fair love and holy peace, pray for us that the peace of God may strengthen our hearts as it strengthened thine!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

I say that the peace which Christ wishes us and which He imparts to us, is *true* peace; it is that peace which He alone is able to bestow. "My peace I give unto you!" says the Lord; "not as the world giveth, do I give unto you." No, it is a peace of which the world has no idea; it is a peace which the world can never bestow. It is that peace which we lost by the fall of our first parents, and which could not be restored to us but by the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour.

Man, as he came from the hands of the Creator, was endowed with sanctifying grace, was at peace with God, at peace with himself, at peace with the whole outer world; but sin destroyed all this, and instead of peace came war, and instead of spiritual life came spiritual death. By sin man was set at variance with God, with himself, and with the outer world. As Holy

Writ assures us: "There is no peace for the wicked," at least no peace of soul. Though a man be on good terms with his fellow-men, yet as long as he lives in a state of sin he will enjoy no peace; for sin is a revolt against God, and every revolt brings with it trouble, anxiety, and war. Without Christ there is no *true* peace; no peace with God, the only peace which is worthy of the name, and which alone is able to calm our agitated hearts.

Listen to the warning of the prophet: "They cry: Peace, peace! and there is *no* peace." There is no communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial. There is no place where the banner of Christ and that of antichrist wave together, nor where men desire to serve God and the devil at the same time.

Moreover, the peace which man enjoys with the world is not complete. But the peace, which Christ gives unto his own, is perfect.

We shall understand this, if we regard one by one the results of the first sin and of all individual sin, and the relation in which soul and body stand to God.

By his very nature man has a soul, reason, will, and heart.

He thinks, he wills, he suffers or enjoys. Now, the fall of Adam darkened the understanding of man, weakened his will, made his heart suffer; and but one can free him from the anxiety which all this causes: one alone, Christ Jesus our Lord.

I have said that understanding, and will, and heart,

each has suffered: man's understanding is beset with doubts in regard to his existence and to his relations to God; his will is weakened, and he frequently feels its moral feebleness and impotence.

But, above all, it is the heart of man which is exposed to the stripes of adversity and to the stings of suffering; nor can it anywhere find comfort but in Christ—but in Him Whom Holy Writ emphatically styles: "The Prince of peace!"

Before Him, before His Word and example, every cloud of anxiety vanishes, and perfect peace makes its dwelling in the soul.

I have already said that when the soul is left to itself it is disquieted in regard to its relations with God and concerning its fate for eternity; it is darkened by ignorance and beset with doubts. "*Pax vobis!*" "Peace be to you!" says Christ to all men.

It is He who spoke through Moses and the prophets; it is He who came Himself into the world, and opening His mouth preached to us the Word of salvation, explaining all those questions and doubts in regard to the other world, which excite, frighten, and harass the mind of man.

He calls himself the Light of the world; and as the sun sends forth his rays, so Christ sent forth His Apostles, that by the light of their teaching day might break for all the nations upon earth; that all might open their hearts to the sweet influence of truth. And great, indeed, is the peace which is instilled into believing hearts with the word of faith spoken by the

mouth of the infallible Church; it is felt by all her truly believing children.

The will of man also is enfeebled by the fall of Adam; hence he feels his weakness, his impotence in the fight with temptation. Hence the anxiety which excites and torments him. How differently man feels when Christ greets him and calls to him "*Pax vobis*," Peace be to you! When the power of divine grace enters his heart, and he can say with St. Paul: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." A calm conscience comforts his heart, from which all anxiety has fled; yes, all that anxiety which, the consequence of his sins, had for years tormented him.

After the fall of Adam the heart of man felt the burden of suffering and the insufficiency of every merely human consolation. How often a friend can only say: I can weep with you, but I can not console you!

How differently a child of the Church feels when Christ who has Himself suffered upon earth calls to Him from the cross: "*Pax vobis!*" and when he recollects that the Lord Himself said to His disciples: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so enter into His Glory." How inexpressibly great was the consolation which fell from the five wounds into the hearts of the disciples when Jesus suddenly appearing among them, gave them that Easter greeting: "*Pax vobis!*" All truly believing children of the Church partake of this consolation in the midst of all the cares and sorrows of this life. For whatever we may suffer, one glance at Christ risen from the dead and marked with

His wounds will cause us to cry out with St. Paul: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation."

But far more grievous does the anxiety of man's heart become, if he has the misfortune to turn from the path of virtue, to precipitate himself into the abyss of sin, and if he is tormented day and night by the reproaches of his conscience. No one but Jesus can give him calmness and peace.

He alone redeemed us, sinners! He alone gave His Apostles and their followers the power to forgive the repentant! a power which Christ bestowed upon His Church until the end of time, and of which we are solemnly reminded by the words of the Apostolic creed: "I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins."

Into the breast of the greatest sinner there enters an inexpressible peace, if he receives the Sacrament of Penance as Christ has instituted it in His holy Church. Ah! what joy when the priest, the representative of Christ, says to his troubled soul: "My son, my daughter, your sins are forgiven!" *Pax tibi!* Peace be with you!

Oh, the happy peace which then *through Christ enters* the heart reconciled to its God!

Finally, the heart of man is frequently pained by the fear: Shall I continue to the end? and what will become of me if Satan, in my last hour, should beset me with temptation, and place all the sins of my life before my eyes in order to drive me to despair? "*Pax tibi*," says our Lord to the loving child of His

Church. I shall complete in you my work of mercy. Trust!

Never can your own heart desire your salvation so ardently as I desire it: Peace be to you!

Nor must we forget the consoling inspirations which Christ sends to all who bow, in suffering, to His holy will, and unite themselves to Him.

Yes, yes, "*Pax vobis!*" I call in the name of the risen Christ to every soul here present.

"*Pax vobis,*" the peace of Christ be and remain with you now, and for evermore!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side."—John 20.

CHRIST appears to His disciples and meets them with the greeting of peace. Every soul that belongs to Him in this life, partakes of that peace. It is a precious and most important good, it is the condition of not only believing in Christ, but of also living for Him, by following in his footsteps. For this peace disposes the soul to comprehend more easily and better the holy will of God, and the inspirations of divine grace, and determines and strengthens it to fulfill them practically.

Therefore, the angels at the birth of Jesus wished to redeemed souls this peace, which only He, the Saviour of the world, can impart.

But for this very reason Satan leaves nothing undone to disturb this peace within us, and as far as it lies in his power, to rob us of it.

There are especially five causes which disturb this peace, while five rays streaming from the wounds of Jesus into our troubled hearts, restore and augment within us the peace of the Lord.

This will be made clear to-day to every one here present.

O Mary, our refuge and intercessor with Christ,

pray for us, that we may obtain that peace which thy divine Son brought into the world.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

When speaking of the causes which not only disturb the peace of Christ in our hearts, but which also rob us of it, I do not mean to address myself to all indiscriminately, but to those who are really children of God and who live in that saving grace without which there is no peace of heart. I speak further to those who, although living in a state of divine grace, are, nevertheless, troubled on account of different reasons, and lead a life of sadness—and, alas! only too many are thus afflicted. No doubt many of these are now before me.

I ask, therefore, what are the things which can disturb us, even as children of God, but which flee at the sight of the five wounds of the risen Saviour? I answer:

The first cause is the feeling of being alone and forsaken here upon earth, and being in need, having no one who gives us even so much as a thought.

This is a frequent occurrence here in America, especially among those who have left their native land, and who, living here without acquaintances, friends or relatives, must say to themselves: No one gives me a thought!

As long as we have relatives or friends we are comforted by the thought: All these think of me.

Hence parents desire to die before their children, that these may think of them, pray for them, and thus aid them into heaven. But if all our relatives, friends and acquaintances die before us—ah, how sad!

You widow now before me, you feel this. Your husband, your father and mother, brother and sister, are all long since dead. You have neither son nor daughter. You are all alone in this dreary world! Nobody thinks of you. Yes; One does think of you, One who alone is worth more than all the others, and this One is Christ! He thinks of you as nobody in the wide world will ever think of you. For He came into the world for you, and He thinks of you as if you were the only soul for whom He became man, and whom He came to save.

A stream of peace flows from the wound in the right hand of Jesus, into our afflicted hearts when we recall the words of Christ: 'From all eternity have I thought of thee' and "I think continually of thee," and "have compassionately drawn thee to Me."

As the light of the sun streams over the entire earth, and yet sheds on each person individually its beams, its warmth, its light, as if he alone were in the world, even so Christ, the eternal Sun of Justice, shines on the entire human race, but in such a manner as if each individual were receiving the full benefit of redemption by himself alone.

St. Paul says: "He delivered Himself for me," and each and every one of us has a right to say the same.

The second source from which care and anxiety

arise within us is the many tribulations to which we are subject, such as poverty, bodily suffering, and other sorrows which seemingly threaten to drown all hope despite our manly efforts. When thus afflicted, and reeling under the heavy burden of our miseries, what a ray of confidence from the wound in the left hand beams upon our oppressed heart as we recall those words of our Lord: "Be of good heart, I am with you; have confidence in me!"

Be our need ever so great, Christ exhorts us, by word and example, to remember that it is but a trial of short duration, and that we must endure it for the sake of our salvation, even if we lose our life by it; for these, our sufferings, will one day weigh heavily in the scale of reward, if accepting them as coming from God's hand, and not from man, we bear up with them and unite them to His merits. How consoling for the sorrow-stricken heart must be those words of our Lord: Fear not! I will take care of you! and again: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!

The third cause of disquiet to the human heart is the ordeal of interior temptations, when all the avenues of the mind are incessantly besieged by dark fears, perplexing doubts and sadness. Ah! what a thrill of alarm well-nigh stuns us, as we ask ourselves the excruciating questions: Am I in a state of grace? Am I upon the right path to heaven? Is it the divine will of the Almighty that I should continue what I have begun, or undertake what I have heretofore neglected?

The fear accompanying these questions is frequently more calculated to harass and rack the human heart than all temporal miseries.

But how soothing is the light which, flowing from the wound in the *right* foot of Jesus, carries peace and tranquillity to the troubled heart. Jesus says: I lead you! I lead you through the voice of those whom I have set in my Church as pastors and guides, and of whom I have said: "Whosoever hears you—hears Me." Cast away, then, all doubt, for if you disclose your heart to My minister, to your superior or confessor, you can not stray from the right path! How comforting to be able to say to one's self: I am upon the road of salvation; Jesus leads me!

The fourth cause which troubles the human heart arises from the thought, where shall it find protection and help at a time of exterior persecutions or interior temptations?

Then it is that, contemplating the wound of the left foot, and remembering the words of Christ, I protect you, we are comforted in our heart and convinced that Jesus is with us!

Yes, Christ has assured us: "All power is given to me," etc. "That which the Father hath given me, is above all." "I know my sheep, and no one is able to tear them away from me." Think of this, timid soul, and cry from the depth of your troubled heart: Jesus is my protector! Not a hair of my head can be touched without His knowledge! Jesus who protects

me is Omnipotent! This thought will comfort and console.

Lastly, the fifth cause of disquiet to the human heart is the indifference, the coldness of men, even of those who are nearest to us.

The fifth and most powerful is the ray which streams from the wound in the side of our Saviour into the heart of man. For who is there that, when weighed down by affliction, can gaze upon the bleeding heart of Christ without remembering those words: "He loved His own unto the end?" and who is not comforted and solaced at the sight of a love so tender and so excessive? Come, then, all you that suffer and are heavily laden; look upon your Saviour shedding the last drop of His precious blood for your salvation. Listen with affection to the silent eloquence of those wounds. Listen to the sweet invitation of Christ: "Behold these wounds from which I have shed the last drop of My blood for your sake, that you may love Me as I love you, and that you may one day, resting on My heart, enjoy the bliss of My eternal love. Fear not—trust and serve Me with a joyful heart, with joyful love!"—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed."—John 20.

IN to-day's Gospel Christ says to Thomas: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed," whilst at another time we find Him saying: "Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see." What is the explanation of this seeming contradiction? Were not the eyes of Mary and of Joseph blessed? were not the eyes of all who beheld our Saviour in the flesh blessed? Yes, but only in so far as they believed in Him and regarded Him with eyes of faith, listening to His divine lessons, and imitating His holy example. For does He not say again: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it in their hearts?" Of what avail was it to the Scribes and Pharisees to see and hear our Lord, since they hardened their hearts against Him? Of them and such as them He said: "If I had not come, and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin."

If, then, the words: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed," are to be realized in us, our lives must agree with our faith. I shall to-day endeavor to answer the question:

In what relation does faith stand to our spiritual life?

O Mary, thou who didst see and believe, but didst live according to this belief as no saint or angel, pray

for us that we may bear witness by our lives to the faith we profess!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"The just man," says St. Paul, "lives by faith." To know whether this text applies to us, we have but to look at the chief properties of life, and we shall be able at a glance to see how far faith influences our daily conduct, how far it is a vital force within us.

A living man *breathes*. This breathing is an emblem, a figure of the influence of sanctifying grace, that vivifies our souls, enabling them to perform works meritorious in the sight of God. As St. Paul assures us, we could not of ourselves pronounce the name of Jesus in a meritorious manner. To do so the assistance of divine grace is needed, of sanctifying and of actual grace, the latter coming to our aid as soon as we have reached the years of discretion. This action of grace in the soul is the breathing and pulsation of the spiritual life.

He who lives, *sees*. He sees the bodies by which he is surrounded, he knows that they exist, he can distinguish their various qualities, and judge how far he can use them towards any aim or object he has in view. Now, faith does the same for our souls. The mind of the unbeliever is obscure, he does not know why God created him, why the universe was called into existence. The believer, on the contrary, sees the whole universe like an open book illumined by the

light of faith; he sees himself created by God, for God, destined, after serving his Creator during this short life, and using all things of earth for that sole aim, in a future life to be made a partaker of the infinite enjoyments and the infinite glory of God Himself. The lives of the saints teach us what strength and zeal the knowledge of this sublime destiny can impart.

He who lives, *hears*. A lively faith gives sensitive ears to the soul. The teachings, the promises, the menaces of Holy Writ are listened to readily by the man of faith. Countless whisperings of the Holy Spirit are caught by his attentive ear, and so he is at once informed of his duties towards God and animated to fulfill them. What does the infidel know of whisperings of the Holy Ghost? Deafened by the noise of the material world, his spiritual senses are clogged and he remains unconscious of the voice that is ever warning men to follow Jesus and to serve their God. The promises and menaces of revelation are alike void of effect when they reach only the ear of the body and are not heard by the soul. Different, indeed, is the state of him who is animated by a lively faith. How quickly he hears the inspiration from on high! In the hours of temptation, how cheering the promise of eternal happiness, how terribly plain the menaces of eternal woe!

He who lives *speaks*, *enjoys*, *grows*. Faith gives to the spiritual life speech, pleasure, development. "I have believed, therefore have I spoken," confessed David, and with him all who have living faith. St. Ber-

nard says: "Nothing pleases me, nothing interests me to which the name of Jesus is not united."

Why do we possess the gift of speech? why has God given us this power of communicating our thoughts to our fellow-men, if not that we may use this gift to draw men to Him by persuasion? When the Holy Ghost appeared on Pentecost in the shape of tongues of fire, it was not upon the heads of the Apostles only that he rested, but upon the heads of laymen and women too, thus to signify that all Christians should be inflamed with the desire of helping by word and work to spread the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth. To be able to do this all must be well grounded in the doctrines of our holy faith. Let this be an admonition to Catholics of their duty (a duty which is incumbent upon all, especially in our day) to read good books and pay careful attention to sermons, that being thus well acquainted with the foundations of their faith they may help both to defend it against its enemies and to enlighten their countrymen who wander in the darkness of unbelief.

Let us see now how faith gives rise to enjoyment, growth, development in the spiritual life of the soul. Is it not faith that enables us to participate worthily in the sacraments? What but faith leads us to the sacred tribunal of Penance, and to the holy table where Jesus Himself is our food? The more a man's soul is enlightened by faith, the more does he realize the weaknesses, the imperfections, the miseries of his poor nature; and consequently the more comprehensive and

frank is his confession, the more ready his disposition to do penance, the more steadfast his purpose of amendment. How much greater, then, must be the grace of this sacrament in such a man than in one whose belief is neither lively nor earnest? What shall I say, then, of the effects of this virtue on the soul that humbly approaches Holy Communion? The heart filled with lively faith can not but be aroused and inflamed at the thought of Who it is that thus deigns to come to us. Faith makes us feel and realize fully the personal presence of Christ within us, and thus binds us anew to His holy Church by kindling in us the desire of living as true children of so loving a Master! and finds expression in the deep prayer of adoration that fell from the lips of St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God!"

Blessed indeed are those who see not, but who believe, and live according to their faith! Amen!

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

FIRST SERMON.

"I am the Good Shepherd."—John 10.

IN to-day's Gospel Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd, and well does the title become Him.

Many other names are given to our Lord in Holy Writ. He is called "God" and "Lord," the "Father of the Family," the "Promised Messiah," the "Saviour and Redeemer of His People." That He deserves them all, every well-instructed Christian readily understands; for He is, indeed, both God and Lord—the Father of the family, which, as Messiah, He has redeemed and saved.

One name, however, is especially applicable to Him, that of the "Good Shepherd." Christ calls Himself, emphatically, the Good Shepherd; and it is profitable for us to consider what this title of Christ means, as the elect are frequently typified by our Lord and His Prophets as sheep.

The more clearly, then, we realize what the shepherd is to the sheep, the more ready and willing shall we be to follow Christ, our Good Shepherd, as His faithful sheep.

Let us, therefore, to-day consider Christ as the Good

Shepherd, and reflect on the qualities that entitle Him to this appellation.

O Mary, thou who art next to Christ, the Good Shepherdess of His flock, thou zealous and first follower of the Lord, pray for us, that thy divine Son may acknowledge us as His sheep, and may be to us a Good Shepherd—our Redeemer, our Lord!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

Christ calls Himself the Good Shepherd, and such indeed He is. To prove this, we need only think of the attributes which Christ mentions as belonging to a good shepherd

The first of these is: "To know his sheep." Every good shepherd, of course, *knows* his sheep; but none know their flock so well as Christ knows His. Even the most careful shepherd is not always able to recognize a sheep that has strayed from the flock, so that he may lead it back to the fold. Christ, however, as Good Shepherd, knows every human soul which He redeemed, and knows it better than the soul knows itself He knows every one. He knows the thoughts, the words, the wishes, and the actions of each—all his good and all his evil inclinations. He has a thorough and complete knowledge of each and every man.

A good shepherd *calls* his sheep, that they may remain near him, and not stray away from the flock and the good pasture; and the sheep *know his voice.*

How perfectly Christ possesses all the qualifications of a Good Shepherd! An inner and an outer voice is continually calling us. He admonishes, instructs and guides us by His voice. We hear it in the depth of our heart, through the inspirations of His grace, and we hear it, too, in the admonitions and warnings of those whom He has installed as His vicars upon earth.

Happy are we if we listen to this voice, if we follow it, and avoid the dangers which threaten our salvation! Happy are we if, when tempted, we make use of all those means of evading the persecutions of Satan which Christ points out to us!

The good shepherd *loves* his sheep, and *goes before them*. How admirably our Lord fulfills this duty to us! "I am the way," He cries to us, "follow Me." "I am the Truth and the Life."

The path of virtue and perfection lies before us, glorious in the light of our Lord's example—an example of the perfect fulfillment of the great commandment of loving God above all things and one's neighbor as one's self. If we but follow the voice of Christ, it will guide us in the way of salvation, into the best, the most nourishing of meadows, which is His Holy Word—the instructions and the graces which He imparts to us through His Church.

How refreshing, strengthening and delicious is this pasture! Nor is this all; but He does for us what no other shepherd does for his sheep, He *sacrifices Himself* for us, and *nourishes us*, soul and body, with His sacramental flesh and blood.

What a Good Shepherd! And, to accomplish this, what does He do for each one of us? He not only leads us by His almighty power and goodness towards heaven, but He also offers Himself up daily for us all in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"A good shepherd," says our Lord, "*protects* his sheep." And Christ promised His powerful protection to His Church, which is the flock of the Good Shepherd, when he said: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her;" nor shall they prevail against any of His children who make use of those weapons and means of salvation which He intrusted to them.

Yes, the most holy name of Jesus alone protects us triumphantly in every danger that threatens our salvation, for no one shall be conquered or lost who pronounces with confidence this holy Name, and with it calls for help. For, to protect and save us, Jesus gave His life, and the last drop of His blood.

This Christ did for us—His children, His sheep. Never has an earthly shepherd done a work like this; never could it have been done. Where was there ever found a shepherd who was wounded and slain for his sheep? Yet Christ was wounded and slain for us! "He has delivered Himself for me," can every soul exclaim gratefully and lovingly with St. Paul? For me, He was born one cold winter's night; for me, He fled into Egypt; for me, He remained working in Nazareth; for me, He bore all the toils of His apostolic life; for me, He was scorned, scourged and crucified! What a Good Shepherd!

A good shepherd guards his sheep; but still, at the last, every sheep becomes the prey of death. Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls to us: "He that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live." Death, since Christ has redeemed us, is no longer to us what death is to a sheep, namely, destruction.

No; through Christ, the Lamb of God, sacrificed for us, we have a right to exclaim: "O death! where is thy sting?"

Oh, the goodness our Shepherd shows to us, especially if we consider the relationship in which this Good Shepherd stands to us! As Shepherd, He is at the same time our Father, who has made us children of God. He is our Brother, and a Brother who has taken to Himself our nature, and elevated it above the choirs of angels.

He is our Friend, and what a Friend! He gave His life for us! He is our King, and how generous, how wise, how grand a Monarch, who will place us all on thrones! He is our Bridegroom, and what a union awaits us with Him in the joys of heaven!

Let us follow Him like good sheep, that He may lead us into the fields and meadows of Paradise! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"My sheep know Me,—and hear My voice."—John 10.

NO one doubts that Christ has the right of calling Himself our Good Shepherd, since the qualities which He mentions, when speaking of the good shepherd, are strikingly apparent in Himself. But is it equally clear that we are His *sheep?* Do we bear the marks which Christ gives us to recognize His sheep?

How many, alas! of those who, because they have been baptized and educated in the bosom of the Church, style themselves Catholics, deserve that reproach of Christ, which we find in the Apocalypse: "Thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead" (3, 1).

Reflecting on the marks by which Christ distinguished His sheep, and listening to the secret revelations of our own consciences, let each one examine and see if, perhaps, this reproof of Christ be not directed to himself. In this manner will each one be able to determine whether he belongs or not to the fold of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

What, then, are the marks which, according to the words of Christ, distinguish the true sheep of the fold?

I will point them out to you to-day.

O Mary, devotion to thee is one of the signs by which the true sheep of Christ's fold are recognized,

pray for us, that we may receive the grace not only to be called Catholics, but also to live a Catholic life!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

In the words: "My sheep know Me," we have the first sign by which Christ describes His sheep.

In how few of the many who call themselves children of the Catholic Church can we trace this sign in its full and comprehensive significance?

There are multitudes who believe in Jesus Christ, and outwardly fulfill their duties as children of the Church, and yet are strangers to that intimate knowledge which their close relationship with Christ, as souls redeemed by Him, naturally supposes.

How many, who, though baptized, live like children of the world, without further instruction, and know Jesus only in name!

They know Him as the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind, but are grossly ignorant of the beneficent and manifold relationship in which He stands to them as the Dispenser of the innumerable blessings of redemption.

How many fail to grasp the meaning of the words: "Jesus our Father!" Ah, how loving a Father! It is He that restored to us the glorious birthright of the children of God, which we had lost in the fall of Adam and by our own personal sins, thus becoming children of Satan instead of children of God.

How many understand not the meaning of the

words: "Jesus our Lord and King!" and fail to appreciate the happiness of being His subjects, soldiers of the Church militant, fighting valiantly under her standard, and strong in the hope of reigning one day with Christ, the "King of kings!"

How many fathom not the meaning of the words: "Jesus our Brother!" Through the mystery of the Incarnation, Christ has become in very deed our Brother!

How many consider not the meaning of the words: "Jesus our Friend!" How great a Friend has He not been to us! He has shed the last drop of His blood for us; and we know, according to His own rule, that "greater love no man hath, than that a man lay down his life for his friends!" Finally, as a reward of His friendship, He invites us to share with Him the joys of heaven.

How many know not the meaning of the words: "Jesus our Light!" Yet He is "the true Light that enlighteneth every man who cometh into this world."

How many ponder not the meaning of the words: "Jesus our Counsel, our Example, our Guide!" Still what a depth of instruction they contain! He is, indeed, our Counsel, our Example, our Guide; and He Himself calls upon us: "Follow Me."

Lastly, how many understand not the meaning of the word: "Jesus our *Solace*, in all the woes and trials of life; Jesus our *Hope*;—our *Strength*;—Jesus the *Joy* of our heart;—our *All!*"

This intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ we secure

by prayer, and, especially, by devotion to the blessed Sacrament of the altar. That there is no more effectual means of acquiring a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ than frequent communion with Him present upon our altar, is the testimony of all who have reached that sublime union of which St. Paul speaks, when commending the hidden life through Christ in God.

Therefore, if we consider the lives of the majority of those who call themselves Catholics, how few shall we find among them who can say in the full acceptation of the words: I know Jesus!

If we possess this personal knowledge of God, then our lives will be stamped with those other characteristics, which Christ enumerates, when He speaks of the sheep whose Shepherd He is.

He says: "They hear My voice, and follow Me." Doubtless, if our knowledge of Christ be real, it will be inseparable from a desire to please Him, and, hence, to know and fulfill His will.

Is that your case?—"They hear My voice, and follow Me." How certain, how characteristic a sign of the true sheep, the true follower of Christ!

In order to understand the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and to hear and follow the voice of Jesus, we must not only be thoroughly in earnest and filled with a great longing to do His holy will, but we must also be animated with that loving confidence, which is so well symbolized by the sheep following the voice of the shepherd and crowding around him.

They hear My voice, and follow Me with true self-

abnegation, perseverance and love of the cross, upon the path which I walk before them.

The true sheep of the flock of Christ flee all the occasions of sin, and dread losing sight of Him. They are watchful, and seek the protection of their Shepherd at the slightest approach of danger.

The real sheep of the fold of Christ understand how to use those means which He bequeathed to His Church, in order to heal the wounds her children may have received from the wolves of the spiritual life, and they know, moreover, how to guard themselves against new attacks.

As this trait *of being with Christ* is distinctive of His sheep, so, too, is that abhorrence they experience for those hirelings who seek to corrupt them, and for the wolves of sinful inclinations, which threaten to tear them to pieces. Christ as the Good Shepherd protects them by His gracious providence, and they follow Him as predestined souls towards the pasture-lands of eternal life!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And other sheep I have that are not of this fold, them also I must bring." —John 10.

IN to-day's Gospel, Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls mankind, redeemed and saved by Him, His sheep, and points out several characteristic signs by which they may be known.

He says: "They know Me," not only as far as His voice is concerned, but in all those relations in which He stands to them as their God and Redeemer. My sheep both inwardly and outwardly hear My voice,—outwardly, in the teaching of My Church; inwardly, through the inspirations of My grace. They follow Me by the imitation of My virtues; and I lead them unto eternal life.

There is, however, still another sign which distinguishes His true sheep, and this one is the most important and the surest. Christ does not indeed point to it emphatically, yet it stands sufficiently prominent to remind us, in a forcible manner, of our duty as Christians of assisting Him with zeal, in order that He may have the joy of bringing other sheep, such as do not yet know Him, into His fold, for He says: "And other sheep I have, them also I must bring."

We must endeavor to do all that lies in our power, to convert and save unbelievers and sinners.

O Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, thou who desir-

est the salvation of mankind with all the power of thy motherly love, grant us thy blessing, that we may be instrumental in leading souls to heaven!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold, them also I must bring."

The greatness of this desire of Jesus, and the earnestness with which He wishes our co-operation, become clear to us when we consider why He came into the world and shed His blood for us; why He sent His Apostles throughout the world; why He instituted his Church, and remains with her until the end of time. His motive for all this was the earnest wish He had to save souls.

His mission was to save mankind, yet not to force or necessitate this salvation. No! man redeemed by Him must undergo the probation of his liberty in the service of God, if he would win heaven by his merits.

Christ desired that all who love God sincerely, should share in the work of redemption, in order that heaven may be truly their own by their voluntary participation of divine grace.

And this not only regarded the Apostles whom He sent out as the first Heralds of the Faith, but it is likewise true of all the faithful who, until the end of time, may thus find ample means of winning merits for heaven.

Thus the Apostles and first Christians understood His holy will.

"If He sacrificed His blood for each one," says St. John to the early Christians, "each one of us should be ready to shed his blood, were it demanded, for the salvation of his neighbor."

And, indeed, as history abundantly testifies, the Christians of the first centuries fulfilled this duty with zeal and success, like true and loyal children of holy Church. Every one in his station and calling was an apostle and missionary.

While the priest administered the holy Sacraments in secret to the faithful, the first Christians labored unceasingly to bring other souls to hear the Word of God, and thus win them to the faith of Christ

What the early Christians did it behooves their successors to imitate by seizing every opportunity to labor for the salvation of those who, through irreligion, unbelief, or a sinful life, either have not as yet entered the fold of Christ, or having entered it, have willfully strayed away.

Especially in the time and country in which we live, have the children of the Church a most favorable opportunity of proving themselves, by true apostolic zeal, faithful sheep of the Good Shepherd.

But it might be objected, what can I, an ordinary person, do to convert heretics, unbelievers, or sinners,—I who am a farmer, an artisan, a merchant, an innkeeper, a soldier?

I answer: Whoever you may be you possess ways

and means to aid the Church in the salvation of souls. I will enumerate and classify these ways and means:

First: Live a Catholic life. "So let your light shine before men," says Jesus Christ, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

If every husband and wife, every father and mother were to live according to the maxims of their holy faith, what would be the consequence? The fulfillment of the words of St. Paul: "The husband would sanctify the wife; the wife the husband; both would sanctify their children."

How many children, unfortunately, are lost to the Church, either because parents do not fulfill their duties as Catholics, or because children heed not the admonitions of parents, and fail in those duties which devolve upon them as Christian youth!

Live as a Catholic should live; and those who are not Catholics, influenced by your example, will perceive the holiness of the Catholic Church, and little by little will be moved to examine her doctrines and to recognize her truth.

What is the great stumbling-block to the irreligious, and what prevents them from entering holy Church? The cause is only too often, the miserable lives of bad Catholics.

I say secondly: Instruction, instruction! Profit by the press. Provide yourself with books of instruction, written to evince the truth of the doctrines of the

Catholic Church. This will assist your children in keeping their faith.

Procure for yourself a small library and make use of it. Read to your children every day something from the lives of the saints, and other devotional books. Thus you and your children will become thoroughly grounded in your holy faith.

Thirdly: Distribute these books among heretics and unbelievers. These books work more good than many a sermon, which is often, perhaps, only half heard and half understood.

Fourthly: Secure for those that are erring an opportunity of speaking with a priest. Be obliging and kind to them, and *pray* for them.

Oh, if all the children of the Catholic Church acted in this manner, how many of our erring brethren would become Catholics, and how many souls would be led to enter upon the path of salvation!

Make use of these means, especially in this country where no obstacle presents itself, and America may become the land, in which are fulfilled those words of Christ: "And there shall be one shepherd and one fold." May the inhabitants of this land confess one God and Father in heaven, one only-begotten Son, the Saviour and Redeemer; and upon earth one true and saving religion, the holy Roman Catholic Church, our Mother! Amen!

NOTICE.—I have published a series of instructive and religious books in vindication of the Catholic faith, namely: "Catholicity, Protestantism, and Infidelity," whose aim is to show that one must be a Catholic, if he desires to be a child of the true Church of Christ.

2. "A Manual of the Catholic Religion;" or, "What one must know who wishes to be a thoroughly educated and instructed Christian."

3. "The Sacred Heart Mission Book;" or, "How you must live if you desire to follow Jesus and save your soul."

4. "The Apostolic and Infallible Authority of the Pope;" or, "The necessity of obeying the Head of the Church in all decisions of faith." A book on a most important subject in these our days, in which so many are led astray and suffer shipwreck of the faith.

5. "Easter in Heaven;" or, "How to live in order to gain Heaven," the joys of which should be continually in our thoughts.

6. "Lives of the Saints, with Practical Considerations;" or, "How others have walked before us upon the path to heaven."

7. "Under the Protection of the Blessed Virgin."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

FIRST SERMON.

"You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice."—John 16.

WHEN Lucifer, with his followers, rebelled against his Maker, the kingdom of the angels became divided into two parts—the good angels, or those who had remained faithful, forming one; the fallen angels, or those who had rebelled, the other. So, too, from the time of our first parents, the human race has in like manner been divided into two classes—the faithful, who were called the children of God; and the followers of Cain, called the children of men. These two classes have ever been directly opposed to each other. The children of men seek the goods of this world; the children of God, those of the world to come. The former work for what is temporal, the latter for that which is eternal. The children of this world, on the one hand, following their own will, gratify every desire; while, on the other, the children of God, wishing in all things to accomplish the designs of God, submit cheerfully to every trial, and of their own accord crucify their flesh and its concupiscences.

And if the life of the good Christian differs so much from that of the bad, what, think you, must the difference be in the future that awaits them?

The sadness of the children of God will soon be changed into eternal joy; but the joy of the children of the world into sorrow and weeping.

It is to this contrast, my brethren, that I wish to draw your attention to-day.

O Mary, obtain for us the grace so to grieve with thee and thy divine Son upon earth as to rejoice with you forever in heaven.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice." It was for the encouragement of His Apostles that Christ uttered this prophecy. He foresaw the sufferings they would undergo for His name, and it was His wish that trials should not come unexpected, but that they should be well prepared for them. He warned them of tribulations and persecutions, and in their persons He spoke to all Christians who, like them, would have to take up their cross daily and follow their crucified Master.

Yet He wished them to understand that it would be only for a little while, and He said: "A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me. I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you."

"A little while, and you shall see Me." A little while! "What does it mean?" asked the Apostles.

Be courageous and confident, He seems to say to them; the time of trial will soon pass away, and then I shall be your reward for an eternity. "You shall lament and weep, but the wicked shall rejoice;" but do not, on this account, despond, for the triumph of the wicked shall be short-lived, and the day will presently dawn that will secure for you the reward of all your labors. Truly, two small words, yet how full of instruction and of consolation!

"You shall lament," said Christ to His Apostles; and, through them, to us also, who glory in being Christians, and who are desirous of imitating their virtues. And ever since the fall of Adam, has not this world been a land of exile to the children of God? To what persecutions have they not been subjected by the children of this world and the powers of darkness? How sad has been their lot on earth, and in what sorrow have they not passed their days!

Were we to look no further than the present life, our grief, I grant it, would be inconsolable; but as Christians, followers of Christ, holding from on high the precious gift of faith, we must view the cross in the supernatural light of that faith, which teaches us that these sorrows will soon pass away, and a happy eternity succeed them.

Now, what is it that causes us most sorrow? Let us examine it closely, and we shall see clearly that all we suffer is permitted by God for His own greater glory, and our future good.

In the first place, it may be that we are poor, or have

become so suddenly by what seems to us a caprice of fortune. Here is one who was once wealthy; to-day he finds it difficult to earn the bread necessary for the support of himself and family. You are sad and oppressed with anxiety, because you see those near and dear to you obliged to suffer from want, or at least deprived of that contentment they once enjoyed. Or again, your honor may have been assailed. You were once courted and esteemed, respected by all. But a day came when calumny stripped you of your good name, to be prized above all riches; and from that time those who, perhaps, had once greeted you from afar, now shunned your very approach. Or you are in grief, it may be, for the loss of your health; formerly, you were strong and active, but you have been stricken down with paralysis, or your lungs are hopelessly gone. Finally, death may have visited a happy home, and taken a beloved wife, a loving and hopeful son or daughter, and you are now alone. Your friends, perhaps your family, have abandoned you, and there is no one to speak a word of consolation to you in your sorrow. And so for some one of these reasons you weep, and feel life a burden.

But how soon is not this sorrow changed into joy when, enlightened by faith, we consider the words of Christ: "A little while, and you shall see Me!"

Why mourn the loss of temporal goods? A Christian should prize what is eternal. What is the world and all its riches compared with heaven and God? And this is the promise made to the poor in spirit, if

during this short life they support, for the love of God, whatever affliction it may please Him to send them. Even were the time of life not so short, but like that of Methusala, prolonged to a thousand years, yet, in comparison with eternity, such a life would not deserve to be called a moment.

You have been robbed by calumny of your honor, and you are now an object of contempt and ridicule. But what is honor? Whatever it may be in itself, if by retaining it we should lose heaven, how unworthy of our aspirations would it not become! Are we to prefer the honor bestowed on us by men to that which God has in store for us? Who, my brethren, are they that honor us, and what do they honor in us? They are themselves miserable sinners, and, perhaps, more worthy of being despised than we are. But who is to say that we are worthy of honor? One thing is certain, if our faults were known to men as they are to God, far from any one honoring us, on the contrary all would despise us.

But we must rise above the esteem or contempt of men; what they may say or think of us will one day avail us little, if we be not at the same time pleasing in the eyes of God. Moreover, this honor bestowed by man vanishes, while that which will accrue to us by our humility and faithfulness in the service of God will soon develop itself, notwithstanding the contempt of men, into the infinite glory of the blessed, and will remain with us forever.

You have lost your health, and your days are spent

in sorrow on that account; but do not lose courage. Man is soon freed from all suffering; a little patience in adversity will sweeten the bitterness of your cup of sorrow, shorten your purgatory in the next life, and furnish countless opportunities of adding new jewels to that crown of glory which you will one day receive.

Soon—in a little while—you shall receive a glorified body. The sufferings of a mortal body must necessarily be of short duration, the joy of a body glorified is never-ending.

And what is death that it should afflict you so much? In reality you never die, for your soul is immortal. Perhaps it is the separation from others which grieves you? Bear it with patience and resignation; soon you will be united in heaven to Christ, and to His Blessed Mother, to the angels and saints, and to those from whom you were separated here below.

Is it not true, then, my brethren, that we have very little reason to complain, whatever be the sufferings we endure? See how transitory they all are; whereas, the cheerful resignation with which we see the will of God perfectly carried out in our regard, will merit for us the glory of a blissful eternity.

With these thoughts ever present to our minds, our life will never be without some consolation; and, even in this world, we shall begin to send up those hallelujahs and hymns of praise which we shall continue to sing for all eternity! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"The world shall rejoice." John 17.

IN the Old Testament David and the Prophets frequently express their surprise at the apparent prosperity of the wicked and the seeming misfortunes of the just. The former, they remark, succeed in all their undertakings, and pass their days amid riches and pleasure, while the latter often lead a life of continual want. They, however, also call attention to the shallowness of the wicked man's good fortune: for they tell us that brief is the gladness of spirit which the children of this world enjoy.

The children of this world, who, in the spirit of the world, live in sin and not in the friendship of God, receive here the reward of those morally good works which they may have done. Their joy, however, will only too soon be changed into sadness.

To understand the folly of those who heed but little, or perhaps not at all, this truth, we have only to consider the words addressed by Christ to His disciples, and to meditate upon the words: "A little while." We shall then not fail to see:

How foolish it is for a child of the Church to envy the children of the world their temporal joys.

O Mary, thou who didst stand but a few hours beneath the cross, to gain the happiness of being forever at the side of thy Jesus in heaven, grant that we may

not be scandalized and led to destruction, seeing the well-being of the children of the world!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

"The world shall rejoice," says Christ. So it is. A craving for enjoyment has ever marked the life of sinners. In the Book of Wisdom this aim of the sinner is distinctly set forth. "Let us," say worldings to one another, "let us crown ourselves with roses; let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments; let us every-where leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion and this is our lot."

I need not add that these sentiments and aspirations prevail even to-day with the world's devotees; for we know this truth from experience.

The world invites its followers to gratify their desires and to enjoy life. Though we admit, that, in regard to the children of the Church, unbelief is not the cause of this thirst for enjoyment, still we must grant that the want of a *living* faith causes these children of the Church to live like worldlings and to seek satisfaction in temporal pleasures.

Alas! we have but too many sad examples. And why? Because these unfortunate people consider not how unhappily ends the path upon which the desire of temporal happiness has led them.

This truth becomes clearer than ever, when we reflect upon the words used by our Lord in to-day's Gospel, touching the joys of this world.

Let us call to mind, one by one, the objects which serve to fill the hearts of the worldly-minded with happiness. They are wealth,—honor,—health,—the gratification of the senses,—the society of others,—a long life of undisturbed enjoyment. It is for these goods that the worldly live; they consider not the words of Solomon, called forth by the recollection of his temporal happiness: "Joy, why hast thou deceived me?"

To be rich seems to the children of the world happiness unbounded, and a cause of great gladness.

What joy to a worldly man, if he suddenly finds himself a millionaire or a possessor of a princely fortune! But how insignificant, how very insignificant, are riches of this kind compared to the wealth that faith promises us!

Moreover, how short is the duration of all earthly possessions compared with approaching eternity, and how immeasurably great will be the loss of the children of the world who will one day be compelled to exclaim: Oh, for mere trifles I have lost heaven and its possessions! Truly their joy shall then be changed into sorrow.

To be honored,—to be admired by every one,—to be in office,—to lord it over others,—this seems greatness to the children of the world; this fills the hearts of the worldly-minded with joy and exultation. And yet, of what little value is honor: how quickly it passes away! How great, on the other hand, how indescribably great, will be the loss of the princely glory

of heaven! how great will be the shame that will cover sinners, who, as Christ says, will be forced to cry out: "Ye mountains fall upon us! ye hills cover us!" Their shame will last forever.

To be in good health, and to have every thing that can please eye and ear, and can afford all manner of gratification to the body, pleases the mind and delights the heart of worldlings.

But in itself, how unseemly, how low; yea, how shameful for man, as man, is not this kind of gratification!

Was not St. Paul right when he said to the converted heathen: "What is now left you of all that of which you are ashamed?"

How short, moreover, is the enjoyment? But how enduring will be the pain of the punishment which the sinner, especially by this kind of sinful enjoyment, will draw upon himself for all eternity? In him will be fulfilled the words: "As much as they have rejoiced, so much pain give them now." The sinner, buried in the torments of eternal fire, will be forced to exclaim: "I suffer pain in these flames—for evermore!" How great also will be the loss of those joys, which no eye hath seen, nor ear heard, and of which no conception hath entered into the heart of man,—which he will have irreparably lost for a mere trifle. This, as Holy Writ tells us, the sinner, filled with despair, shall before long begin to bewail in hell.

A child of the world, a sinner, would fain enjoy, in the society of sinful companions, the pleasures of life.

But how often, even in this world, does he not experience faithlessness and cruel deception? But even if he do not, he will soon be separated from his companions by certain death. His reunion with these evil companions in the other world will be only a greater torment for all eternity.

"Bind them into bundles," says Christ, "and cast them into the fire." There he will be in company with the damned; there he will experience, that as in heaven the joy of each saint increases the joy of the others, so in hell the torments of every damned soul will increase the torments of its companions.—This will last for all eternity!

What a difference between joy and sorrow; between the present and the future; between time and eternity!

Woe, then, to those who, in this world, sinfully rejoice with the world. Their joy will soon be changed into never-ending sorrow. May such not be our lot!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"But I go to the Father."

CHRIST calls God His Father, His Father according to His divine nature, because our Lord is the only-begotten Son of God from all eternity; His Father according to His humanity, because Christ has no earthly Father.

Elsewhere our Lord says: "The Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father;" and again He tells us that He has come into the world that all the world may know the Father and Him Whom the Father hath sent, Christ Jesus.

To spread therefore the knowledge of God among all nations, our Divine Master sent out His Apostles, and by the light of faith countless myriads of the children of men learned to know God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, and the end beyond all description magnificent for which every human soul was formed.

It is true the enemy of God and of His kingdom endeavors in the first place to prevent men from knowing God; and in the second place, in regard to the children of the Church, he uses all his power to prevent the true knowledge of God from having its proper influence upon their lives.

Now there is one especial link amongst those that unite us to God, which most powerfully inclines us to honor and serve Him, namely, the title and quality of Father which He possesses in our regard.

This title then will be the theme of our present discourse.

O Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, that we may ever think of God as our Father, in order to live as His true children!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

If the grace of faith is to aid us in serving God and gaining salvation, then it is most important that we should continually think of God, and walk ever in His presence, and strive to recognize and fulfill His holy will. God is of Himself the most perfect of beings, and each of His infinite perfections, as we think of it, is capable of filling our minds with astonishment and awe, and of inclining us to the worship, praise, and service of so great a Master.

But it is the thought of God as our Father, that exercises the most blessed and active influence upon our lives as children, in His service.

Unfortunately not all His children think of their relationship to God in such a manner as to advance with faithful, loving perseverance in the service of their Father.

Pious souls, indeed, think of God immediately upon awakening. They think of Him as their Lord and Creator. They recognize the duty and necessity of serving that Lord who will one day be their Judge. For, it is a terrible thing to stand before God for judg-

ment. All this is perfectly right, but at the same time something still remains to be done. We must remember that God is not more our Creator than He is our Father. This thought is of great importance, as it not only helps us to recognize our duty of serving Him, but it also disposes us for receiving the graces needed for that end, and imparts to us a zealous faithfulness in their use.

The first condition necessary to receive divine grace is, as St. James admonishes us, an entire confidence that God will bestow it upon us when we implore it of Him. Now we can not but see how the thought, God is my Father, must fill our hearts with this necessary trust.

It is true the dignity and majesty of God and all His divine perfections require man's service and confidence; but the thought of these things fills us rather with fear; and having proved ourselves unworthy of grace in the past, we are tempted to doubt whether we shall receive it in the future, and even whether we would be strong enough to make good use of it if received.

Such a fear, which might paralyze all our action, quite vanishes when we consider that this infinitely grand and terrible God is at the same time our Father, yea, a loving Father.

St. Teresa tells us of a Carmelite nun who used to spend a whole hour in a single recitation of the Lord's Prayer. And this time will not seem too long when we consider that the word Father, applied to God, can furnish us with matter for many hours' meditations.

Now, how gladly should we follow the admonition of Christ, to make the thought of Father our ruling thought in regard to God! It is so full of encouragement and consolation. It is an attribute implying at once worship and love, and so is most potent to keep us in a loyal-hearted service of a God whom we can call our Father.

This title which God bears for our sakes tells us that we are not as numberless other creatures whom the Lord hath called into existence, but that we are created according to His likeness, and for Him, and that we may one day be intimately and for evermore inseparably united to Him.

It tells us, further, that as by the fall of man our right to the sonship of God was lost, so we have received again, through the incarnation, the happiness of being called and of being children of God; and further still, it tells us that as brothers of Christ we are become dearer than ever to God our Father.

How great a motive to keep us from offending Him! and how great a motive also for leading a holy life, by which to please Him, because He is our Father!

This attribute, this relation of God to us, teaches us that not only as our Creator and Lord has He the right to require a holy life from us, but that as our Father He desires it much more than we can ever desire it, for He knows, as we do not, the full meaning of that eternity which depends upon our life.

What an encouraging motive have we here of laboring to gain the whole world to His service, for He

is that Father Who, for the redemption of every human soul, delivered up his only-begotten Son to ignominy and death!

But also how trustingly can we pray to Him for ourselves for protection and divine grace in every need of body or soul! For at the same time that He is our Father He is also infinite power, goodness, and mercy.

This confidence in Him makes our hearts light, fills them with courage and strength, secures our perseverance, and banishes fear, perplexity, weakness, despondency, and distrust in the service of God, every one of which is so dangerous to our salvation.

Therefore, in the prayer which Christ gave us, He taught us to think of God first of all as our Father; not to call Him God and Lord, but "Father," *our* Father.

"Our Father who art in heaven." Blessed are they who follow these words, this admonition of Jesus, who think continually of God as their *Father*, and pray to Him as children to a Father. They, without doubt, will live as His true children, and will one day enter the community of all the children of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the incarnate Son of the Almighty! Amen!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

FIRST SERMON.

"And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin."—John 16.

TO-DAY'S Gospel contains three reproofs by which, as Christ says, the Holy Ghost, whom He promises unto His Church, will convince the world of sin.

We all know what Christ here designates by "the *world*." He means the great number of people, who indifferent alike to God and the state of the soul after death, do not think of any thing but to be happy with temporal happiness here below; He means those whose only desire is to possess, and to enjoy as much and as long as possible; He means those who, like unbelievers, are indifferent to the truths of faith, or who, if they confess the faith with their lips, do not trouble themselves about its precepts, promises, and threats, and thus practically lead the life of infidels.

Let us consider the manner in which the Holy Ghost convinces the world of sin, and how inexcusable a crime it is in worldlings not to shun sin, but to think only of satisfying their desires.

O Mary, thou purest of the pure, pray for us that we may abhor sin as thou didst abhor it!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"The Holy Ghost will convince the world of sin." This protestation of Christ reminds us of another declaration made by Him, when in speaking of the hardened Jews, He said: "If I had not come they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin."

Yes, great and inexcusable is the sin of man who, gifted though he is with a rational soul, still prefers to walk the path of iniquity; for how abominable does not sin appear to man if he only looks at it in the light of reason!

The heathen already recognized the truth of this, for, as is well known, it was a doctrine of the philosophical sect of the Stoics, that sin was to be avoided for sin's sake, on account of its inherent abomination, even if otherwise it could be committed with impunity.

This will become clear to us according to St. Ignatius, if we think of sin personified; that is, if we imagine a man who in his words, thoughts, wishes, and actions is nothing but the expression of some or other vice. Personified in this way we see sin in its real aspect, in its native horror.

I will give you an example: We pass a drug-store, and see in the show window bottles filled with liquids of different colors—red, green, yellow. If, however, we take of this liquid but one drop, it will appear almost colorless; one sees the color only in concentration, when a large quantity is together.

Thus also in regard to sin. Men may be proud, miserly, envious, intemperate, idle, unchaste, and still we frequently perceive nothing of it in our daily intercourse with them. They do not always show their true disposition. On the contrary, they often seem free from all vice, and devoted to the pursuit of virtue.

How horrible would that man appear whose entire being expressed nothing but idleness, pride, avarice, anger, envy, intemperance, or impurity!

Further, as far as the consequences of sin are concerned, the experience of all past centuries has shown how terrible they are for men in particular and in general.

Holy Writ says very justly: "It is sin that causes the misfortunes of nations." What has caused all the wars that have raged to the horror and unhappiness of nations? Generally, overbearing pride, covetousness, or injustice. And what is the cause of the unhappiness of the people even in times of peace? I say it is the oppression of the poor, the want of brotherly love, and the corrupting influence which sin and vice exercise upon social life.

How happily would men live if in true charity they loved one another as they love themselves, and hence were always ready to assist one another. Were this the case, Paradise would seem to have returned to earth.

It is sin also that undermines the happiness of families. If there were no unkindness, no anger, no intemperance, no other vices, how happily families would

live! The same may be said in regard to every man taken singly.

What is the source and cause of the discontent of many a man, who has in a worldly way amply provided for his well-being? I answer: It is his uneasy conscience, the remorse that will not let him forget. It is sin that so often embitters life, and drives many a wretched soul, though surrounded by riches, to commit suicide.

Is not the Holy Ghost right to convince the world of sin? But how much more justly *since the coming of Christ* will He convince the world of sin, and reprove and judge it.

As far as the sin of unbelief in general is concerned, how inexcusable is the state of the world! And of this sin man was and is still to-day guilty; for Christ is not yet recognized as God and Redeemer over the entire earth, and all human souls have not yet joined His holy Church!

Further, the sin of the Jews is unpardonable, in not having believed in Christ, and in not believing in Him now, though they witnessed all the miracles He performed, and still have in their hands the prophecies which were fulfilled in Him.

Not less inexcusable are the heathens for not recognizing Christ after the Apostles had preached the Gospel over the whole earth, confirming their word with so many signs and miracles.

If, as St. Paul said, the heathens seeing God so unmistakably manifested in the marvels of creation were

culpable in not recognizing Him, how much more to be blamed are they in not recognizing Christ as God and Redeemer, since the marvels of the Gospel are not inferior to those of nature!

But they, also, who, though recognizing Christ as God and Redeemer, yet do not look upon His Church as the one true, the one saving Church, and so live separated from her, they, also, are not less inexcusable; and by their obstinacy and willful blindness, well deserve the menace of the Holy Ghost: "He will convince the world of sin." Finally, they are especially concerned, who, though they profess with their lips the true faith, and are children of the Church, yet live like heathens! How justly the Holy Ghost reproaches them for their sin, and with them the whole world buried, as it is, in the depths of sin!

How frightful, how horrible sin appears when we consider that God Himself became man, that through His infinite merit He might reconcile us to His Father!

If we further consider what Christ taught, that men might learn to know God in His entire perfection and goodness; the example of virtue that Christ gave to the world, and the ingratitude with which He was repaid, if we consider how terrible, according to the teachings of revelation are for all eternity, the consequences to those who die in sin; full well we see that the Holy Ghost has only too much reason to convince the world of sin, especially in regard to those sins committed by children of His holy Church, who often sin

more, and lead more shameful lives than Jews, Turks, or the heathens.

How many graces has not God given to the children of His Church to keep them free from sin, and to raise them when they are fallen! Add to this all that God has done in order to save each one individually.

Yes, yes, the Holy Ghost gave unto us the children of His Church, to recognize by the light of faith the horror and abomination of sin, and He has the right to reprove men, and especially the children of the Church, because of their sins; for though they belong to the true Church, yet year after year they are adding sin upon sin!

Were they to see, as they ought, the entire wickedness and evil, the ingratitude of sin as the Holy Ghost shows it to them by the light of faith, they would understand how St. Catharine of Sienna could declare herself ready rather to be buried in the abyss of hell than to offend God by a single sin.

They would if they had had the misfortune to be overcome by temptation, hasten, filled with terror and remorse, to cast off the yoke of sin, to be reconciled in truth with God, and to become a living temple of the Holy Ghost for time and eternity! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"The Holy Ghost will convince the world of justice: because I go to the Father."—John 16.

THE first reproof which the Holy Ghost shall make to the world, according to this prophecy of Christ, on the great final day of retribution, is particularly addressed to the wicked and impious men with whom this world abounds; to those men who heed not the commandments of God, and spurn the voice of the Church He has established; to those men who are so blinded by their passions that they realize not the abomination of sin, and see not the terrible consequences that must necessarily follow it. For this their fatal blindness shall the Holy Ghost reproach them—a blindness which is all the more guilty and inexcusable since Christ came into the world as a sacrifice for the remission of sin, and that the sins of men might be forgiven, died in unspeakable agony upon the cross!

The second reproof of the Holy Ghost is more particularly addressed to the children of the Church, who have the happiness of knowing and believing what revelation teaches us respecting the value and excellence of Christian perfection and the necessity of striving after it, and who, nevertheless, show very little zeal for the acquisition of that priceless treasure, who make no serious efforts to sanctify their souls.

and who, far from hungering and thirsting after justice, content themselves with discharging, in a very indifferent manner, the duties which our holy religion imposes on its children.

Oh, how much reason has the Holy Ghost to convince the lukewarm children of the Church of Justice, that is, to reprove them for their indifference and want of true holiness!

O Mary, Queen of heaven, pray for us, that, like thee, we may hunger and thirst after Christian perfection!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The Holy Ghost will convince the world of justice. He will convince the careless and imperfect Christian of not having acted up to the spirit of his faith; and what excuse shall he be able to offer in his defense? None, none whatsoever. For as the man who has plunged into every sinful excess shall stand mute and defenseless before this dread accuser, so also shall the careless and lukewarm Christian; for he had just the same reasons and motives as the other for reforming the irregularity of his life and serving God with fervor and fidelity. Human reason might have taught the former that his conduct was wrong, guilty and altogether unjustifiable; but human reason might have taught this same to the latter; for if the heinousness of sin is such that human reason clearly beholds it

and stands horrified at the sight, virtue, on the other hand, possesses so many charms, that the natural light of each man's mind reveals to him its surpassing excellence and beauty.

Human reason, I say, unenlightened by faith, is capable of teaching all this to man; and hence it is that many of the heathen philosophers, while they affirmed that moral evil should be avoided on account of its inherent abomination, though no punishment were attached to it, maintained, on the other hand, that if the practise of virtue were attended by no other recompense, its own intrinsic perfection and loveliness should induce and oblige all reasonable beings to love and practise it with all their might, and to shape their whole life and conduct according to its admirable dictates.

How inexpressibly beautiful, attractive and pleasing will every virtue appear if we consider it as being represented and in some sort embodied in the person of a man, whose whole life and character is a perfect reflex of humility, meekness, purity, kindness, goodness, patience or brotherly-love! How happy would the human race in general be, if every one obeyed the voice of his conscience, even though mankind were not so happy as to possess the enlightenment of faith.

If the children of the Church, at least, endeavored to practise the commandment of brotherly-love as Christ has given it, they would mutually love and assist each other, and paradise would once more bloom upon

earth. And yet how little do Christians think of living in conformity with these rules of virtue and justice, although faith and reason combine to show the necessity of doing so.

But what shall we say when we think of those children of the Church who are filled with the spirit of the world and live only for the world! Of those children of the Church who are so little moved by the words and example of their divine Master that they neglect those exercises of Christian perfection which He has pronounced eight times blessed, and care not to follow Him on the road to salvation!

But what must be our sentiments on considering the unworthy life led by so many Christians, when we recall to mind the numberless means of sanctification which Christ purchased for us by His death and daily dispenses to us through the ministry of His Church?

There are the seven sacraments, which, like so many streams issuing from an inexhaustible source, produce throughout the Church a constant flow of graces and benedictions. There is the holy sacrifice of the Mass, wherein we see daily renewed upon our altars the immolation of the Son of God, at the cost of whose blood we were ransomed forever from the captivity of Satan. There is, in fine, not to mention many others, the precious gift of prayer, by means of which, offered in His name, we can be safely delivered from all the evils which oppress us and enriched with whatever graces and favors we may think proper to ask for.

To these may be added the inspirations and impulses of the Holy Ghost, the example of those saints whom the Church has raised upon her altars, as also the edifying lives of the many zealous Christians who are still to be found amongst us, and whose example whispers to us the admonition St. Augustine heard, when reflecting upon the lives of the saints: "Could and can these and those—why then not I?"

Happy we, if we faithfully persevere in the love and service of Christ—then will His promise be wholly fulfilled in us: "I give you My peace, a peace which the world neither gives nor is able to give; the sweetness of which it does not know and which it can not imagine." Great, indeed, is the sweetness which this blessed peace infuses into the soul, a hundred-fold more precious, according to the words of Christ Himself, than any thing that this world can offer to its children. It is, in fact, nothing else than a foretaste of heavenly bliss which, as St. John of the Cross says, the saints enjoy already here upon earth.

If such be our recompense during this present life, what happiness and glory must be reserved for us in the world to come!

Christ has gone thither before us, and with Him Mary and numberless saints.

What would have been our feelings, had we been present on Mount Olivet at the moment that Christ ascended into heaven? We certainly would have cried aloud to the departing Redeemer: "Think of me in Thy kingdom."

Why do we think so little of heaven? and why do we avail ourselves so little of those opportunities that are granted us of gaining daily and hourly, by a truly virtuous life, additional merits for heaven, and thus increasing continually the glory and happiness that are reserved for us hereafter?

Is it not strange; nay, is it not amazing and quite incomprehensible, that in spite of such considerations as these, and in spite of all the graces and means of sanctification which Christ holds out to us, so many Christians should still be found leading careless and indifferent lives,—so many who have neither taste nor relish for the things of God,—so many who care not to regulate their conduct according to the maxims of our holy religion?

Good reason, indeed, will the Holy Ghost have to convince the world of justice; good reason to reproach, before assembled mankind, those who during life were deaf to His secret reproaches; good reason, especially, to confound the slothful and tepid Christian for his want of fervor in the service of God.

It is, indeed, much easier to understand the wickedness and malice of the enemies of the true faith than the dullness and indifference of those who call themselves its friends and supporters.

Christians, who have been listening to me, what does your conscience say? Are you of the number of those who do not hunger after righteousness and holiness of life?

Pray to the Holy Ghost, that He may inspire and

strengthen you, that you may follow, as true children of the Church, in the footsteps of the saints, and that you may merit to hear on the last great day not the reproof but rather the approval and commendation of the Holy Ghost!— Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"He will convince the world of judgment."—John 16.

IN to-day's Gospel we are told what effects will follow the coming of the Holy Spirit, whom our Lord promised to send to the children of men. These are, that "He will convince the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment."

And we are told, too, why He will do all these things. The reasons given by Christ for the first two will present no difficulty, at least to those who heard my explanation of this same Gospel last year. I shall speak, then, to-day on the third effect and its causes.

Now, this is none other than that the Holy Spirit "will convince the world of judgment." Why will He do so? "Because," says our Lord, "Satan, the prince of this world, is already judged." What, then, is meant by the words, "The Holy Ghost will convince the world of judgment?" It often happens that a passage of Holy Writ has no meaning for us, because of the darkness which envelops it. But when once the light has shone in upon it,—when once we have come to understand the passage rightly and fully,—we see how rich in meaning it is, and how well adapted to the practical part of life.

Now, this is just the case in regard to the words: "*The Holy Ghost will convince the world of judgment,*

because Satan,—the prince of the world,—is already judged." It may appear dark to us at present; but when once it has been explained, we shall see how many and fruitful are the lessons which it contains.

O Mary, ever Virgin and Mother of our Redeemer, and our Mediator, who, because of thy freedom from the least stain of sin, hadst no reason to fear Jesus as Judge, pray for us, that we may one day stand well prepared before the tribunal of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Our Lord assures us that "The Holy Ghost will convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged."

To what judgment does our Lord draw the attention of mankind? And who is this prince of the world, of whom He speaks?

The judgment of which Christ makes mention, is that great and general judgment in which He Himself will pass sentence on the whole human race. That there will be such a judgment, we can not for a moment doubt. It is one of those truths which have been known by all nations, even in the far distant ages, when men were few upon the earth. The people of Israel believed in it, for it had been made known to them by Moses and the Prophets. Holy Job solemnly and emphatically bears witness to it when he declares the resurrection and coming of Christ. These are

his words: "In my flesh I shall see God my Redeemer. This my hope is laid up in my heart."

With what courage did not the seven Maccabees avow before King Antiochus their faith in this general judgment! "Thou, indeed, O most wicked man," they said, "dost destroy our body; but the Lord will raise us up again: as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection unto life."

The greatest proof that we have of it is in the resurrection of Christ Himself from the dead, and in His solemn declaration that He will come again to judge all men.

Now, if all this be true, have we not reason to think constantly of this self-same judgment, and of these words of St. Paul: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?"

The words of the creed remind us of it daily. Yet there are Christians who have it but seldom before their minds, because they live after the manner of the world, and not as children of God. They appear to forget it entirely: no wonder, then, that the Holy Spirit reproaches them for their forgetfulness.

But apart from what the Apostles have written and said respecting the general judgment, reason itself demonstrates its necessity. For if God gave to man a free will, whereby to direct his actions, there ought to come a day when man should render to his God a full account of these actions.

And since men live together, it is but right that they should be judged together; and this, for the pur-

pose of showing to the whole world the mercy and justice of God towards each and every individual.

But though all men believe to a greater or less extent in this general judgment, how few of those, on whom the light of Christianity has not fallen, ever think of its coming! Nay, even many of those who are children of the Church show no less indifference and forgetfulness. They seldom recall to mind the fact, that they must one day give a strict account to their Creator of every thought, and word, and action. This is all the more surprising, when we consider what our holy faith tells us concerning the sentence passed upon the fallen angels, the severity of which is enough to fill us with terror. It is in reference to this, that our Lord says: "Because Satan,—the prince of this world,—is already judged."

But in spite of it all, how few reflect upon the coming of that judgment, the memory of which they recall every time they recite the creed! They live as carelessly and as indifferently, as if they had no belief whatever in the promise, that Christ "will come to judge the living and the dead." Unfortunately, this contradiction is found only too often in those who profess to be Christians. Their lives are not in harmony with what they have been taught.

How blind and foolish they are! If the heathen, with only the light of reason to guide him, has every cause for dreading these words of St. Paul: "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" how much more so those, who, having been favored

with the light of faith, far from making a right use of it, have allowed it to become extinguished! That menace of Christ's, "Because Satan, the prince of this world, is already judged," is one of fearful import for all such. And why so? Why should it impress us all deeply and truly? Because, as St. Peter tells us, "God, who did not spare the angels, will one day judge us."

Let us ponder these words well. Lucifer and his fallen companions committed sin, and were condemned to eternal flames. And yet, what glorious beings they once were! There is no comparison between the angelic and human nature. The angels are pure spirits: God Himself is a Spirit. Man is not: he has a body. Hence, the angels, owing to their superior nature, are much nobler than men. The least among them stand higher in the order of creation than men. What shall we say, then, of their countless hosts,—of their nine choirs, each more magnificent, more perfect, than the one preceding? Still, not one of the rebellious angels found mercy: no, not even Lucifer himself, the brightest of them all.

O man,—you who are but dust,—a worm of the earth! will God spare you when He will have come to judge? Lucifer and his angels sinned but once: and will the Lord spare you, O sinner,—you, who have sinned hundreds and thousands of times?

Not a single grace came to the fallen angels to help them to repentance. Not a moment of time was given them in which to do penance.

But you, O Christian! you receive countless graces, and for many a long year have you been called by a merciful God to do penance for your sins. Truly, indeed, may the Holy Ghost convince you of judgment: for Satan and his angels are already judged and condemned.

Lucifer and his followers had no warning example set before them to deter them from offending their Creator. You, O Christian, have numberless examples! You have them in the countless number of unhappy beings that now people hell.

The fallen angels were not redeemed:—you have been redeemed. After their fall, they had no means of reconciling themselves to God. For them there were no Sacraments,—no confession,—no absolution.

For you there is every chance of becoming again the friend of your offended Saviour, even though your sins were more numerous than those of all the demons put together.

Tell me, O Christian! is not the Holy Ghost right in convincing you of judgment, because Lucifer has already been judged?

Certainly He is. Hence, St. Peter says only too truly: "O man, if God did not spare the angels, will He spare thee?"

If Lucifer had found mercy after his fall, would he, think you, have sinned again? And you, O sinner! how often have you not relapsed into sin?

But besides what I have said so far, Christ has another reason for declaring, that "The Holy Ghost

will convince the world of judgment." He wishes to show man how foolish he has been in his generation,—how unwise in the judgment which he has passed on the one and only thing absolutely necessary.

If the teachings and miracles recorded in the Gospel had reference to showing man what he must do to become wealthy, to enjoy health and all the pleasures of the world, even to a green old age, that same Gospel would have been received, during the past eighteen hundred years, with open arms by the entire world. But the Word of God does not teach such things, and hence it is rejected by a world, which, wise in matters merely temporal, is foolish in all that concerns a life to come, and in its attempts at justifying itself and its unbelief in the Lord God of all things.

Yes! the Holy Ghost convinces the world of judgment, because Satan is already judged. And yet, the children of the world continue to follow the banner of the fallen one, even past the threshold of perdition!—Amen!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

FIRST SERMON.

"Ask, and you shall receive."—John 16.

TO-DAY, and during the following days of this season, the Church exhorts her children to pray earnestly, to assault heaven with their petitions, if they would desire to follow Jesus, and end their earthly pilgrimage by ascending, like Him, into the glory of God.

Prayers, said in spirit and in truth, are the means which God has given us to obtain divine grace; and the necessity of these means was clearly pointed out by our Lord, when He uttered that memorable admonition: "We must pray always."

Through the hypostatical union of the human nature of Christ with the person of the Son of God, the entire being of Christ was an intimate union with God, and, consequently, a prayer.

Our continual union with God in prayer should be a reflex of this union of Christ. How impressive, therefore, is the admonition: Pray!

But so many pray, and their prayers seem not to have the least effect in rendering their lives holy. Why? I answer: Because they do not pray in the right manner. And why not? Because they do not

pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; because they do not pray in the spirit of these three holy names, with which we are accustomed to begin every prayer, and especially that prayer which Christ Himself taught us.

Let us consider to-day the meaning of the words: To pray in the name of the Father.

O Mary, Mother of God, teach us, thy children, to pray as thou wast wont to pray in the name of the Father!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

I said before, that if we wish our prayers to be effectual, true, and pleasing to God, we must pray, above all, in the name of the *Father*. The first word in the prayer which Christ taught us verifies this; for we commence the Lord's prayer, according to Christ's instructions, with the words:

"*Father, Our Father!*" This word "Father," when spoken with attention, and meditated upon, raises our hearts at once from this earth heavenward, swifter than the eagle's flight; and thus puts our minds in a proper disposition to pray, which is nothing else than the raising of our thoughts to God.

The word "Father" addressed to God also suddenly lifts the veil, and allows us to look into the depth of His divine nature; and places before our eyes clearly and comprehensively the relations that exist between

the infinitely perfect qualities of the God-head and us children of men; for we add: Our—our Father!

It reminds us, too, of the relation which the Son of God, as God, bears to the eternal Father; and calls up before us the remembrance of how God the Son became incarnate, that He might save and sanctify us, and, after death, unite us with our Father in heaven.

These are the thoughts that should warm our hearts when we approach our dear Lord in prayer, and fill them to overflowing with praise and thanksgiving for His goodness towards us.

The entire outer world, which we see, does not possess the happiness of calling God Father. Not the firmament, with all its magnificence, with all its sparkling worlds; no, not to these, but to us alone is it given to call God Father, for God is only their Creator, not their Father.

Through the fall of Adam we lost the happiness of calling God Father; but Christ, when He became Man, regained for us this our lost nobility, and, with it, the great prerogative of calling Him, the Son of God, Brother—a privilege which the angels do not possess.

Now, such being our relations with the Almighty, how can the word "Father," addressed to God, fail to move us to praise Him and thank Him; and give us a sure confidence that our prayers will be heard? If we have this confidence, we may hope all things; for we have it on the authority of our divine Lord Himself, that the prayers of the man who trusts in God can cast mountains into the sea; that is, obtain every

thing that conduces to his salvation. Remember, too, that this confidence is necessary, for "he who prays and doubts," says St. James, "must not expect God to hear him."

That this confidence, strengthened by the thought that God is our Father, may have place in our hearts, and that we may be convinced that prayer, without it, can neither be pleasing to God nor honor Him, but that it rather dishonors Him, let us consider attentively the state of mind in which man is when he prays without confidence.

What can be the reason of his mistrust? Nothing but the doubt! Does God know that I pray? that I ask His aid? or can He, will He, really help me?

Each of these doubts, it is evident, must offend God. How, therefore, can such a prayer be pleasing to Him, and obtain an answer? To doubt that God is aware that we pray, that we ask His aid, is to deny the omniscience of God; to doubt if He can help us, implies the doubt of His omnipotence.

To doubt that He will help us means to deny His infinite goodness, and His fidelity to His promises; for He has often and solemnly promised us, by His prophets and by His Son, that every true prayer addressed to Him in the name of Jesus will be answered.

Now, the word "Father" dissipates these clouds of doubt, and calls up distinctly before our minds those attributes of God from which flow the motives that animate the heart of a child with sure hope of being heard when it asks any thing of its Father.

And the first of these causes which on the part of the Father makes the heart of the child confident when it asks Him for any thing, is the fact that it is its Father whom it asks.

Even an infant, resting in the arms of its father, feels confidence, though ignorant of the reason of such a confidence. In those arms it feels safer than if guarded by an army of soldiers; and, in case of danger, the little one would stretch out its arms for protection not to the soldiers, but to its father.

Now, no father on earth is to his child what God is to us, who are His likeness and His children. Does not Christ Himself say: "Your Father, who is in heaven?"

Therefore no father is as willing to assist his children as God is, for besides being our Father He is our Creator.

Join the loving hearts of all fathers into one heart, melt all their loves into one great love for one only child, and yet this one heart, this one love, can never be compared to the deep divine desire to save a human soul.

God is by His nature imparting kindness, if the creature itself does not prevent Him.

A child, when it asks some favor from its father, feels all the more confident of obtaining its request, if it knows that the father has it in his power to grant it, and if it knows by experience that he always helps his children when they go confidingly to him.

Children of God, how great a trust should fill our

hearts when we draw nigh to God in prayer! He can help us, for He is Almighty. He has already helped us, and will further help us. The grand work of the Redemption gives us the assurance of this, not to mention the particular favors which each one of us have received, such as our vocation to the true Church of God, and the many instances in which His divine providence has influenced our life.

Again, children go to their father with much more confidence, when the father knows that the welfare of their entire life is concerned in the request they lay before him, and that in granting it he grants the desires of his own heart.

Children of God, go, therefore, to your Father, who is in heaven, with confidence, when you wish for some favor which in any way concerns your salvation.

Consider this, child of God, when you pray. Pray as a child of the Lord should. When you have committed sin, make your peace with God. Pray as His child in the state of sanctifying grace; and pray with undivided trust in the name of God the Father, and your prayer will be heard! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Hitherto you have not asked any thing in My name."—John 16.

WE pray, but our prayer is often wanting in confidence. It is the design of divine Providence that prayer should be a means of our salvation; and, as such, it signifes that we should pray for that which is truly useful for us.

When a child, with filial confidence, begs for any thing, a prudent father will, nevertheless, not grant the request, if he knows that what the child asks will prove hurtful to it rather than advantageous.

When we make the sign of the cross, and pronounce the second word, the second name "and of the Son," we have at once before our minds the object which we must keep in view when we address God in prayer.

I ask: *What does it mean to pray in the name of the Son, and to ask really for something?*

I shall endeavor to make this clear to you to-day.

O Mary, Mother of Jesus, teach us, thy children, how to pray, so that we ask of our heavenly Father, in the name of His Son, whose Mother thou art!

I address you in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

I said before, that if your prayer is to be pleasing to God, to be efficacious and sure of finding favor, it

must refer to what the name of the Son indicates: Jesus—salvation.

How many are there that pray and take no heed of this condition! They pray and beg of God things that have direct reference to their temporal well-being only.

They begin business, leave a place, journey over land and seas, marry this or that person, and all for temporal motives—for the sake of money; and they expect that God should bless all these their undertakings.

But was your enterprise really for your salvation? For this, above all, you must consider when you pray. It would surely be no blessing if God permitted you to continue unmolested in all your perverse ways.

We are reminded daily and effectually by the Lord's prayer, what in particular we should ask.

It begins with these words: "Our Father, who art in heaven."

Christ admonishes us to examine ourselves before we pray, and to inquire: Do I live as becomes a child of God? am I in the state of sanctifying grace? is there no mortal sin weighing on my conscience? If there be, how can I dare call God my Father? "Whoever sinneth," says Jesus, "is born of his father the devil."

If we weigh each of the following petitions, we shall find that in the mouth of the sinner who wishes to persevere in sin, they are but mockery, derision and blasphemy.

Perhaps some unfortunate sinner will now say to himself: "I may not pray, therefore, since I am a sinner."

Truly, you may pray; but first of all you must pray and beg of God that He may grant you, a sinner, the grace of a true conversion, and that He may let you see the evil and vileness of sin; and you must, moreover, be reconciled to Him by a good confession.

But those also, who, if they do not live in mortal sin, still commit venial sins without number, should pray above all: "Lord, wash me clean, and cleanse me from every stain of sin."

If heretofore this has not been in your thoughts while you prayed, then you have not prayed in the name of the Son, the Saviour of the world; you have not prayed for any thing.

"Hallowed be the name," is the second request of the Lord's prayer, and it exhorts us to pray that He assist us and make us partakers of His grace, that we may glorify His name on earth by a life of sanctity.

Was this always the burden of your prayer and desire? Have you, perhaps, prayed to God only that He might make you honored and respected on earth? Alas! then your prayer has not been in the name of the Son; you have not prayed for any thing.

But the heart of a child of God must not rest satisfied with serving God, and glorifying His Christ by a virtuous life, for its own good alone. The Lord teaches us to say further:

"Thy kingdom come."

God has sent His Son to redeem the race of sin-

ful men, and we should desire and endeavor to do our best to make them acknowledge Christ, and become members of His Holy Church. As a means to this end, let each one endeavor as much as possible, that the parish in which he lives may provide for its pastor, church and schools, and let him also aid in the good work generously. Another means, moreover, is that every one, on his part, labor that his brethren, who err in their faith, and who live in his neighborhood, may be converted to the Church, and that Catholics may be reconciled to God, if they live in sin, and that they may serve their Creator as zealous children of the Church. Let him more especially consider those who are related to him; his wife, children, relatives. The means to this end are instruction, exhortation, prayer, and, above all, the example of a truly Christian life.

But even with respect to heathen nations over the entire earth, how much could be done towards their conversion if Catholic missionaries were properly assisted, which, unfortunately, is not always the case, while Protestants are overzealous in disseminating error and hatred against the Church! What do you do in this respect? Is the cry of your heart that of the heart of St. Francis: "Lord, give me souls?" Are you indifferent to the salvation of others? Then you have not prayed in the name of the Son; you have not prayed for any thing.

"Thy will be done."

We must pray for the grace to wish and do that

only which God desires, and to wish and do it only because it is the most holy will of God. There are, however, faults of indiscretion and ill-regulated zeal.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

After first praying to God for the needs of our soul, we next implore Him to provide for our temporal wants, so that in this, too, we may employ every thing as a means to serve Him, and fulfill our duties here upon earth. In relation to this, we would do well to remember the prayer of David: Lord, protect me from too great riches and too great poverty.

We only too often set our hearts upon riches, and offend God by the abuse of them. But in the same manner, when care for the necessities of life engrosses our attention and occupies our time, abject poverty can become dangerous for our salvation.

If you have not prayed in this spirit, you have not prayed in the name of the Son; you have not prayed for any thing, even if you had asked for the possession of the whole world.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

We must forgive if we desire to be forgiven, otherwise our prayer is ineffectual.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

This evil is sin. We see, therefore, that the first and last words of the Lord's prayer teach us that it must be our first and chief endeavor to live in sanctifying grace, and to persevere in it.

It is not unfrequently the case that men pray for even less than nothing, when they ask for things that are dangerous for their souls.

Pray, therefore, as the Saviour's prayer teaches you to pray, for then you will pray rightly, and in a manner pleasing to God; you will ask for what is expedient for you, and what is, in reality, *something;* and you will, moreover, pray effectually in the name of God the Son! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."—John 16.

TO pray in the name of the Father, means to have recourse with confidence to God. To pray in the name of the Son, means to beg for whatever is necessary for our salvation, that in the place, vocation, and circumstances in which we live, we may know and accomplish the most holy will of God. It means, through prayer, to secure the continual succor of grace, in order that we may thus be occupied in the affair of our salvation by the imitation of Christ.

If we ask ourselves, How is it that our prayer often does not exercise this influence on the sanctification of our lives? we are compelled to answer:

Because we do not pray in the name of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of love. Hence it is that our prayer is lukewarm, distracted, and without effect.

Let us consider to-day the truth of this assertion.

O Mary, Spouse of the Holy Ghost, chosen vessel of devotion, Mother of pure love, pray for us that we may love God as thou dost, in order that the Holy Ghost, through prayer, may make our life fruitful in the imitation of Christ!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Do we wish our prayer to be a true prayer, pleas-

ing to God, and worthy to find a hearing? then we must pray in the state of grace, that we may have the right to call God our Father, as the first word of Our Lord's Prayer reminds us to do.

In other words, our heart must be a temple of God, in which the Holy Ghost dwells, and into which He has poured out His love. It must be a heart inflamed with the fire of divine love through the Holy Ghost.

I recall once more the reply of the venerable Armella. When asked: "How do you occupy yourself so long in prayer?" She answered: "I love."

Ah, indeed! were our hearts inflamed with the love of God as was the heart of a Teresa, a Xavier, a Francis of Assisi, an Ignatius, how would we then pray! It would no longer surprise us that the saints experienced such sweetness in prayer, and raised them from the earth,—had, even on earth, a foretaste of heavenly bliss.

It is narrated in the life of St. Peter Regala, that on a certain occasion, whilst he was alone in the choir buried in prayer, a flame burst through the roof towards heaven. People thought that the monastery was on fire. They ran to the choir and beheld a visible flame, which, rising from the heart of the praying saint, made its way through the roof towards heaven —an image and a sign of the love of God burning in his bosom. But even if we withdraw our minds from this extraordinary phase in the lives of the saints, whose prayer was an outpouring of their love for God, we may learn how important and necessary this con-

dition of love of God is for every real, effective and acceptable prayer from the very nature of prayer.

For what is the nature and meaning of prayer? It is a raising of the heart to God, a colloquy with God, a union with God by praising Him, thanking Him, begging Him. In each of these aspects our love of God is an essential condition of true prayer.

First, then, prayer is a *raising* of the heart to God.

If you do not feel your soul elevated—if, whilst you pray, your soul is not lifted up, and you do not bear in mind the presence of God—but, on the contrary, if you allow your thoughts to wander, thinking of your work, of other people, of pleasures already enjoyed or still looked for, to what is this owing? I answer: To a want of love.

Those who really love one another, think of the object of their love, approach it in spirit, and take advantage of its presence to commune with the same. Such would be the case with you, were your heart more inflamed with the love of God. How gladly and effectually would you then pray, and praying feel yourself, to the greatest delight of your soul, in the presence of God!

In the second place, we said: Prayer is a *colloquy* of the soul with God.

When Moses, after his prayer, came forth from the tabernacle, his face shone so brilliantly that the children of Israel were unable to look at him. And what produced this effect? Holy Scripture tells us: Moses,

praying in the tabernacle, spoke to God, as a friend speaks to his friend.

You pray and hardly know what to say to God, unless you are saying your beads, or reading some formulas from your prayer-book. And even when you do really speak to God, how cold, and vague, and distracted is your prayer! Although your lips move, you often hardly know what you say. What is the reason? You love God too little.

Those who love one another know how to converse with one another; hours pass by and they scarcely perceive it. And you so soon grow tired of prayer and become silent! How different would it be, were you to speak to God, impelled by your love for Him, not only as a friend speaks to his friend, but as a child to its father, a brother to his brother, a culprit to his judge, a poor man to him who, he knows, is able to enrich him!

Think of the seraphic St. Francis, who spent whole nights in prayer, without saying any thing, except now and then the ejaculation: "My God and my all!"

Prayer, finally, is a *union* with God, which may become so close, as it was in many of the saints, that even on earth is experienced a real foretaste of the happiness of heaven.

How little does your soul experience of this in prayer! Why? You are wanting in love towards God. Hence, too, it is that your prayer is not what it ought to be, a necessity of the soul, and a union with God, which accompanies you throughout the day, which

keeps you in the presence of God, nay, which even overshadows your night's repose, so that the word of Christ is fulfilled: "Pray always!"

For you, prayer is only a duty; it is not for the soul what breathing is for the body. On this account your acts of *praise*, of *thanksgiving*, of *petition*, which are elicited during prayer, are weak and languid.

A soul that loves God praises the Lord, praying in spirit and in truth; and the more she loves, the more she lauds Him; she adores and praises each of His infinite perfections.

A soul that loves God also thanks God with all the fervor of her soul, for all that she has received from Him.

And as to petitions, a soul that loves God, finally prays all the more ardently and fervently, the more she knows the value of grace and its necessity for doing God's holy will through love of His infinite goodness.

From the love of God, springs particularly the prayer for forgiveness of sins, for grace to expiate past offenses, and to become ever purer and purer in the sight of God.

But not for ourselves only are we to pray, but for the welfare and salvation of others, through motives of love. If the Holy Spirit has poured out this love in your heart, then, as St. Paul asserts, it is the Holy Spirit Himself, who prays in us with unspeakable groanings.

Such a prayer can not but be effective in promoting the sanctification of our lives! Amen!

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

FIRST SERMON.

"But when the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me."—John 15.

BEFORE Christ entered triumphantly into the kingdom of His Father, He made a solemn promise to His disciples to send the Holy Ghost unto them.

Jesus Christ bestows upon Him various appellations, all fraught with profoundest significancy. He styles Him the Spirit of Truth, the Consoler, the Imparter of Strength.

In these designations lie concealed admonitions of paramount importance. Through them we are exhorted to cling, with filial devotedness, to the service of God, and ever to keep our gaze fixed upon the term of our journey through life, the heavenly Jerusalem. For those things which are so indispensable to the happiness of man are light, comfort, and strength.

For what, I ask of you, was the result of Adam's first fatal transgression? The loss of sanctifying grace. With it the Holy Ghost abandoned the defiled hearts of our first parents, and His departure was followed by the saddest of consequences. The brightness of their intellect was clouded, the joy of their hearts dampened, and the strength of their will weakened.

The observations which I have premised, lead me to ask you the question:

Why does Christ call the Holy Ghost, whom He will send unto us, the Spirit of Truth? and what motive lies hidden under that name, which causes us to yearn with all our heart for His speedy coming?

O Mary, thou seat of Wisdom, O thou who hast penetrated most profoundly into the grand secrets of God, and hast conceived a higher estimation of their importance than any other of God's saints, beseech the Almighty to illumine our darkened intellects, and give determination to our will to render our lives conformable to the known truth!

I address you in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God.

When Christ was summoned before the tribunal of Pilate, He called Himself the King of Truth. Hence it follows that His reign is in the kingdom of Truth. Christ's mission upon earth is to be a light for the redemption of mankind, led astray by the crafts of Satan.

In consequence of our first parents' fall, our understanding has been shrouded in dark night, and it is no longer able to discern the road which leads to God and conducts us safely to our last end.

The history of mankind affords ample proof of this statement.

Ah! how horrible a darkness broke in upon the

human race after the fall of Adam! Mankind sank into the night of paganism, lost sight utterly of the path leading to salvation, and toiled only for the attainment of honors, riches, and pleasures!

Even the chosen people, upon whom God ever and anon shed the beams of truth, through the instrumentality of Moses and the Prophets, were plunged again and again into the dark abyss of idolatry. In confirmation of this assertion, I need only allude to the deplorable fall of Solomon—a prince once so wise and favored by God.

While such dismal shadows were enveloping the face of the world, the brightness of light suddenly burst through the gloom in the appearance of the divine person of Jesus Christ. This glorious event finds a beautiful expression in the words of St. John, at the commencement of his Gospel: "In Him was the life, and the life was the light of man."

Now that we are in possession of His holy doctrine, the path to salvation lies distinctly traced before our view; now is held up to our imitation His encouraging example, embodied in the glorious deeds of His life; and we have the consoling assurance that whoever follows His example walks in the light, and shall gain eternal salvation.

That, however, the light of His doctrine might serve as a beacon to future generations, and still point out the road which we must tread as true imitators of Christ, He deigned to send to His Church the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth: "The Paraclete, whom I will send

you," said He, "will teach you all the truth, and remind you of all things that I have taught you." But lest this light might become extinct, He promised to bestow upon His Church infallibility, and in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles He fulfilled His pledged word.

"As My Father sent Me, so do I send you," said Christ to His Apostles and disciples. And again: "He who hears Me, hears you."

After all these blessings, which Jesus Christ showered down upon you, you can not but have a thorough knowledge of the demands that God makes of you, of the end for which you are created, of the destination to which you are tending, and, lastly, of your duties, and the means for their perfect fulfillment. But do not imagine that it suffices merely to know these truths; no, you must also apply most strenuously, to live in accordance with your belief. Hence you can see how appropriately Christ calls the Holy Ghost the Spirit of Truth. For it is this very love of truth that constitutes the principal requisite for leading a holy life.

Woe to us, if we rest satisfied, like Pilate, with asking Christ in indifferent sloth: 'What is truth?" and then turn away unconcernedly from Jesus. If we dare act in this manner, we imitate Pilate in cowardly giving over our Saviour to His bitterest enemies. And what will be the consequence? We shall be damned for our sins, since we profess our faith only with our lips.

Whereas, Christ in His quality of both God and

Man, infuses into our souls the knowledge of truth; the world, on the contrary, ruled over by the evil Spirit, whom Christ calls the prince of darkness, exerts all its power to spread lies and deceptions.

Holy Writ calls Satan a liar from the beginning, and with truth! For even in heaven he gave utterance to that most impudent of lies: "I will rise and become like to the Almighty!" Numberless angels were ensnared by his blasphemous craft, and, like him, thrust out of the kingdom of heaven.

Afterwards he addressed himself to our first parents, saying: "You shall be like gods," and thus succeeded in bringing about their unhappy fall.

Lies and deceits are, and have been, the characteristic marks of his kingdom for centuries.

He inspires men with the foolish desire of amassing riches, of accumulating honors, and of procuring the enjoyment of earthly pleasures. And what does Satan design in using these means? Nothing else but to cause men to offend the Majesty of God by transgressing His Commandments.

And yet what are all honors and possessions of the world but dust? What all purely human greatness and glory but vapor? What all forbidden sensual gratifications but filth? And what is the longest life but a moment's breath when compared to never-ending eternity?

What else does the father of lies propose to himself in spreading abroad his dangerous errors, than to frustrate the labors of the Apostles of Christ?

For although the light of the truth has already been lit in all parts of the world, yet Satan ceases not to induce men to shut their eyes against the light, and to prefer the darkness of idolatry to the splendor of truth. And what else is this but craft and mockery of the devil?

In a similar manner he deceives our separated brethren; for although they are aware of the words of Christ: "I will be with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world," and know that the Church is one and unerring, yet they, by blinding themselves, think that faith in Christ alone is sufficient for their salvation.—But it is saddest of all to witness his successful efforts in deceiving even the children of light, who, though they have eyes to see, see not, and ears to hear, hear not. And why? Because they are deficient in the love of truth. They, indeed, pronounce the articles of their creed with their lips, but they are far from forming an adequate idea of their great importance, much less do they rouse their languid will to a determined resolution to live in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

And, in truth, if a Christian of good will were to impress on his mind a high appreciation of the principal truths of his religion, what great progress in perfection would he not make? He might, for that purpose, propose to himself the following questions: Who am I? What is my last end? What will finally become of me? What heavenly treasures are already in my possession? What am I capable of receiving

still? What dangers threaten my soul? Who will one day be my judge? What alternative is implied in those two words: "either," "or;" *either* saved *or* damned; *either* eternally in heaven *or* eternally in hell?

What grand truths are not these! and yet what a slight impression they produce on us! And why? Because we make too little account of truth; because we have no love of truth.

The same may be said of the use of the means placed at our disposal for gaining eternal salvation. Would to God that we were thoroughly penetrated with the idea of the grandeur of truth! How different our life would be, if we strove to secure for ourselves all the benefits flowing from fervent prayer, from a worthy reception of the Sacraments, and, above all, from a frequent intercourse with Jesus dwelling in the tabernacle!

How often do we not receive the flesh and blood of our Lord, and yet experience none of those salutary effects, which generally accompany the actual presence of the Most High in our hearts? It is because that truth has not yet gained complete mastery over our hearts, which tells us: Under these forms of bread and wine Christ is personally present; it is because our hearts are not enkindled with a real love of that same truth, declaring to us: Under this host Jesus is truly concealed!

As long as we are upon earth we shall be a constant prey to temptations. Yet, what are temptations, when considered in the light of faith, but trifles, which

a believing soul, strong in her God, repulses with scorn and contempt? For this reason the great Apostle exhorts us to have "our loins girt about with truth."

Therefore, love truth, and place no obstacle to its salutary influence. Then you shall bear witness to the truths of your faith in joy and constancy!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"The Comforter, whom I will send you, He shall give testimony of Me."—John 15.

CHRIST promised His disciples to send them the Spirit of Truth.

Man, the spiritual likeness of God, is a reasonable being; and, as such, his most essential need is knowledge, especially the knowledge of his relation towards God his Creator, and final reward.

But man, besides being endowed with reason, has also a heart and feelings. Hence it is that he can not be satisfied with knowledge only, but he also needs comfort and consolation. For whilst, through the fall of Adam, our understanding is darkened with clouds of doubts, our hearts groan heavily beneath the pressure of sadness and despondency. We are continually striving to rid ourselves of these evils, and drive them away.

The human heart needs comfort in order to serve God with cheerfulness, zeal and perseverance; and it can be comforted only through God the Holy Ghost.

This is the object of to-day's meditation.

O Mary, comforter of the afflicted, pray for us, that we may be filled with the sentiments that animated thee in the service of the Almighty, and that thus, being comforted, we may serve the Lord with zeal and gladness!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Few are the years of my life, and tormented with pain," thus sighed and groaned the Patriarch Jacob. And in like manner every mortal feels keenly the pressure of sorrow and pain. And these evils torment and harass not only the body of man but also his soul. With regard to the bodily sufferings to which man is subject, they manifest themselves at the very beginning of his existence. He weeps when he is born, and before he is yet conscious of his miseries, by his cries and tears solicits the help and comfort of those that surround him. Nor will this necessity of comfort and help ever leave him for a moment through the whole course of his life.

How hard, how bitter is the struggle of by far the greater part of mankind for their very existence! how harassing day and night the care to provide their daily bread! Behold, the effects of the curse which the sin of the first man drew down upon the human race: "Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow."

Yea, man would consider himself happy, did but he always possess the opportunity of earning his bread, though it be by the sweat of his brow. How often does it not happen that he is left without work, and consequently deprived of the means by which to support himself and his family! Nor is it of rare occurrence, that after having toiled hard and long, the poor laborer is cheated out of his wages, and the husband-

man doomed to witness the destruction of the crops. Surely such and so many adversities and disappointments can not but produce sadness and melancholy in the heart of man.

Truly, there is much work in life. Even those who appear to be rich often work until late into the night to increase their possessions and secure their treasures.

The poor mortal, thus burdened with earthly care and misery, longs greatly for comfort. He turns to creatures; but, alas! he soon finds out that created things can not satisfy his wants and desires.

But how much are not all these evils increased when sickness is added to them? And, oh! there are so many diseases, and so many and great bodily sufferings! The mere names and descriptions of the ills to which flesh is liable fill many volumes. The sick man longs eagerly for comfort and cure, yet how often does he not hope in vain!

But bodily sufferings are not the only evils which embitter man's life here below. He is harassed also with mental cares. And these anxieties of the heart make him suffer still more than either the struggle for his daily bread or the most painful sickness.

First of all, he must seriously inquire how to serve the Lord our God, how to please Him, and thus secure eternal life.

Man, guided by the light of reason alone, can not find the way to God. And what a torture is it not for the mind to be in a state of uncertainty concerning the means of salvation!

To this we may add the anxiety caused by the continual war which we are obliged to wage against our evil propensities; the concupiscence of the eyes, of the world, and the flesh; the pain caused by the reproaches of conscience, if we have yielded to temptation; the fear of appearing before our God and Judge to give an account of our lives.

Furthermore, how much do we not suffer from slanders, calumnies, and false accusations in our intercourse with others—from dishonesty, violence, and injuries of every sort! Lastly, there is the pain caused by the thought of death's certain approach, and of the humiliating corruption to which our bodies will fall a prey.

What wonder if, amidst all these miseries, man yearns for consolation?

Tell me, sad father, grieved mother, sorrowing widow, and you, poor sinner, troubled by the reproaches of your conscience, tell me, does not your heart long eagerly for rest and peace? But the world—the spirit of the world—is not able to satisfy your earnest desires.

How different is all this when man's heart is prepared to receive within itself the comfort which Christ has promised to send to the human race through the Holy Ghost!

We shall understand this difference more fully, if after reviewing the many sources of grief which embitter our earthly life, we turn our eyes to the sweet consolations which God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of

Truth, is wont to impart to us, provided we open our hearts to Him in faith, and trust, and love.

With regard to our bodily sufferings, we are assured by the Spirit of Truth, that it is God and not man who sends us our crosses.

The Holy Ghost, as Spirit of Truth, and, therefore, also of comfort, recalls to our mind, the words of Christ: The Father in heaven knows your afflictions, He watches over you, and no hair of your head shall be injured without His holy will. Be of good heart, the Holy Spirit whispers to the mourning soul. God is purifying you in the fire of tribulation, and preparing you for the crown of eternal life. Such thoughts indeed impart true consolation to the heart of man.

If we are calumniated and persecuted the Holy Ghost admonishes us to look up to Christ and remember His consoling words: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "Blessed are the poor . . . . Blessed are those that mourn." "Blessed are you, greatly blessed, when you are persecuted for justice' sake; for great will be your reward in heaven"

Yes, these promises of Christ are sources of the sweetest comfort, when the Holy Ghost, speaking from within our hearts, calls them to our minds in the hour of tribulation. And though death threaten us under the form of sickness or old age, yet we need by no means despair. But enlightened by the Holy Ghost, we may joyfully exclaim with St. Paul: "O death! where is thy sting?" it has vanished in the victory of Him who has risen from the dead.

If we have lived in Christ and followed perseveringly in His footsteps, then we shall also rise with Him, and enter triumphantly into the joys of the blessed.

But how particularly consoling is it to one who has sinned and feels remorse of conscience, when the Holy Ghost reminds him, through the mouth of the priest, of these words of our divine Saviour: "Show yourself to the priest;" confess, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are not forgiven;" no matter how great may be their number, or how heinous their malice. Truly there is more comfort in the penitential tears of a Mary Magdalen, than in the tears of joy shed by all the children of the world.

Just and true, indeed, is the saying of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "Rejoice, rejoice always, but in the Lord!"

In this manner the Holy Ghost comforts not only the Church and Her children in general, but He also bestows His consolations on each and every one of us in particular, provided our hearts are prepared to receive these heavenly favors, whose sweet efficacy is known only to those who taste them

Come, then, Holy Ghost, and fill our hearts with such consolations as Thou art wont, as Spirit of Comfort, to bestow upon the children of God in this valley of tears. Let us feel Thy comfort, and let us guard it jealously within our hearts, that thus we may be enabled to fight cheerfully and manfully for the cause of God and the salvation of our immortal souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And you shall give testimony of Me."—John 25, 27.

CHRIST redeemed mankind and established His Church in order to give us the means of knowing the truth of His doctrine, and also of saving our souls. It is true that the Incarnate Son of God might have done all this in other ways, had He willed to force man into believing and living rightly. But God has created man free. He desires, moreover, that, while a member of the Church militant, man should use his freedom to merit the joys and glories of the Church triumphant; and hence it is that divine wisdom and goodness, instead of forcing us, makes us co-operators in sanctifying and saving the human race.

Now, this co-operation is a great source of merit to ourselves, and of glory to God. Speaking of it, St. Paul says: "I endeavor to supply what is wanting to the merits of Christ"—*i. e.*, I endeavor, by my co-operation with grace, to turn these merits of Christ to the good of mankind. So likewise all the Apostles gave testimony of Christ for the salvation of their fellow-men; and this is the calling and duty, not of the Apostles only, but of all Christians, and will be until the end of time!

We shall consider, then, the meaning of the words: "And you shall give testimony of Me."

O Mary, Queen of Apostles, pray for us and obtain

for us the courage and fidelity of those Apostles who surrounded thee in the dining-room at Jerusalem, awaiting the coming of the Holy Ghost.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"And you shall give testimony of Me," said our Lord to His Apostles, and they did according to His Word. Enlightened, strengthened and animated by the Holy Spirit, they gave testimony of our Lord both by word and by work. In that same hour in which the Holy Ghost came down upon them, St. Peter addressed the murderers of the Saviour, saying: "Let it be made known to Israel, and to the entire world, that no other name is given to men by which they may be saved than the most holy name of Jesus." And from that time, as St. Paul testifies, they preached the Gospel over the entire world, confirming it by the holiness of their lives and by their untiring efforts to spread the kingdom of Jesus Christ, until they finally sealed this testimony with their blood.

Thus their testimony was an *illustrious* and *efficacious* testimony; it was, besides, *holy* and most *perfect* in life, and *faithful even unto death*. Hence, if we would show ourselves true children of the Church, and real imitators of the Apostles, we must endeavor to make our testimony like unto theirs.

Theirs, as I have said, was a *splendid* and *efficacious* testimony. They had to teach man why God created him, how sin and misery came into the world, who it

was that freed us from these, and opened to us once more the gates of the kingdom of heaven. Finally, they had to make known to man his duties toward God, his Father, and toward man his fellow-creature—duties that must be fulfilled by all who wish for membership in God's kingdom.

Long had the human race been sighing for an answer to these questions, that were so bound up with the whole life of man in time and eternity. For four thousand years its daily cry and prayer had been that of the Prophet: "Ye heavens, drop down dew from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One!"

At length the Just One came, but His own received Him not. Leaving the earth, He returned to heaven; but not before He had given to His Apostles the mission of spreading the Gospel over the entire world: "As My Father hath sent Me, so I also send you."—"Go ye therefore, teach all nations."—"He that heareth you, heareth Me." And the Apostles did according to His word, and not here or there, but everywhere might be heard from numbers the eulogium: "Oh, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace!"

As St. Paul addressed the learned of the Areopagus at Athens, so he likewise addressed vast numbers every-where shrouded in the night of ignorance, or buried in the dark and fitful gloom of idolatry. "We preach to you the Unknown God." For the first time since the creation men, armed with the power of working miracles, traversed the whole earth, teaching

all nations; and so illustrious and so convincing was their testimony, that the whole human race must have embraced the faith, had man only been of good will.

But man was free, and abusing his freedom, as he does even to-day, he turned a deaf ear to the truths of the Gospel. "Hearing, he did not understand," as God often permits both as a punishment to men of bad will, and as a trial of merit for the good who strive to convert them.

Had the world, then, been honest and sincere, it would have accepted the teachings of the Apostles, for, it could find no flaw in their testimony, or in their manner of giving it; and, besides, it was a holy testimony, amply confirmed by the sanctity of their lives. With St. Paul they could all say: "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." And truly they were faithful followers, even unto death; for they sealed their testimony with their blood.

As I have said, however, not to the Apostles only, but to all who believe in Christ, to all who are children of His Church, are addressed the words: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and praise the Father and Him whom He has sent, Jesus Christ." To give our testimony faithfully, therefore, we must observe the following conditions:

As the Apostles and early Christians, we must be fully *instructed in our faith*, that we may be able to defend it and instruct others in its teachings. This is but the first requisite for giving testimony of Christ,

and how few there are who can do even this much! The great majority are themselves but poorly instructed, and how can they attempt to teach others?

Besides, our life must reflect as a mirror *the virtues* which our holy faith demands of us. We must observe in a special manner that first of all commandments—brotherly love, burning with a deep desire to save and sanctify every immortal soul, to bring unbelievers into the true fold, to lead sinners into the path of righteousness, and to do unto others all the good that lies in our power.

Lastly, we must learn to look upon trials and sufferings with an eye of faith, to bow our own will before the holy and supreme will of God; and this even to our latest breath. To live thus is to give testimony of Christ; and to do all that is demanded of us we are supported by the strength of the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in our hearts as in His temple.

If every child of the Church would testify to the true faith of Christ in this manner, we should have little need of miracles to prove our faith. For such a life, amid the corruptions of this world, would be a perpetual miracle, and a most effectual means of turning sinners and unbelievers to God, to the Church, and to a holy life, in which they would follow Christ in this life and be saved by Him in the life to come!—Amen!

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

FIRST SERMON.

"And they began all at once to make excuses."—Luke 14.

THE Church reads to-day—the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—a Gospel, which points not only to the table which Jesus, by the institution of the most holy Sacrament, has set for the children of his Church, but also to His great desire that they may all draw from this inexhaustible fountain of all graces the merits of the Redemption, to sanctify their lives and to secure for all eternity the salvation of their souls.

Indeed, we need not hesitate to say that the entire life of the children of the Church, if it is to be a truly Catholic life, depends on their benefiting by the presence of Christ in the most holy Sacrament, as was acknowledged so clearly and distinctly by the apostolic Christians.

The holy Eucharist is a source of grace to us in three ways. It is, namely, first a sacrifice; secondly, a banquet; and, thirdly, the Sacrament of Christ's presence among us here upon earth.

Unfortunately, so many children of the Church are inconceivably indifferent to the presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, and do not benefit by it as they should,—they *excuse themselves.*

Let us consider, in order, the emptiness and frivolity of these excuses.

I shall speak to-day, especially, of the high regard we should entertain for Holy Mass, and of the fervor that should animate us to derive from the holy sacrifice great fruit for our salvation.

O Mary, thou who didst most highly esteem the presence of Christ, and most wisely benefit by it, increase in our hearts love and devotion to Jesus, especially in that character in which, as the sacrifice of the New Testament, He is offered to God upon our altars!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first relation of Christ to us in the Most Holy Eucharist, is that of a *sacrifice.* Through the transubstantiation effected at Mass, Christ sacrifices Himself always anew upon the altars of the Church to His heavenly Father, and thus becomes the sacrifice of the New Testament, which, according to the words of the Prophet Malachias, would be offered to God over the entire earth "from the rising to the setting of the sun," and until the end of time.

Let us consider, especially, two points; namely,

esteem for this holy sacrifice, and *participation* in its fruits.

Both of these points deserve the greatest attention, as they relate to the essential part of external worship, namely, sacrifice, and to the countless graces which flow from this sacrifice to those who share in its fruits.

I say, first: The Most Holy Eucharist relates to the essential part of the external worship of God. The reason lies in the fundamental character of a sacrifice.

The offering of sacrifice has been recognized since the creation of mankind by all nations of the earth, as an expression of devotion, and the highest and most proper way of worshiping God.

Abel and Cain already offered sacrifices, and these were surely preceded by Adam. The Patriarchs brought sacrifices, and so did Melchisedech and Job.

But we see also among all nations countless temples and altars, and the sacrifice which was offered there was at all times regarded as the highest act of the worship of God.

And when God chose from among the human races a nation to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, He gave Moses manifold and minute commands in regard to the offering of sacrifices. He glorified, by a visible sign of His presence, the temple which Solomon had built, in order to give a special sanction to the sacrifices offered there by priests, forming a cast by themselves and separated from the people.

All these sacrifices, however, were only figures of that sacrifice which, according to the command of

Christ, is offered upon our altars, and which, in overflowing fullness of graces, exceeds all its prototypes. To recognize this truth we need only think:

First: *Who* it is that offers, and *what* is offered, and in what *way* and manner.

He who makes the offering in the person of the priest is Christ Himself, the incarnate Son of God. As St. Ambrose rightly remarks, the words of the transubstantiation remind us of this. The priest does not say: "This is the body—this is the chalice of His blood;" but he says: "This is my body—this is the chalice of my blood," as if Christ Himself were speaking.

Yes, indeed, it is Christ Himself, Who, through the words of transubstantiation uttered by the priest, offers the sacrifice to His heavenly Father.

Catherine of Bologna saw one day at Mass—which was read by her confessor, St. Raymond—at the moment when the priest took the host in his hand, two persons standing before the altar on the same spot—St. Raymond and Christ in him. She saw at the elevation of the host, in the hands of the priest, the hands of Christ with the marks of His wounds!

That which St. Catherine saw with her bodily eyes, we see at every Mass with the eyes of faith.

And *what* is offered? Christ Himself lies upon the altar a victim, veiled in the sacramental species.

This transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is, according to St. Augustine, an infinitely greater miracle than the creation of

the world, which God called into existence by the words: "Let there be light!" Then Omnipotence called finite beings into existence—now the Creator Himself appears at the word of a creature—of the priest. And how perfectly this sacrifice which Christ makes of Himself includes all the acts of worship which distinguish sacrifices,—as, for instance, praise, adoration, thanksgiving, petition and atonement!

The reason is, that Christ is both priest and victim, and that by the personal union in Him of the Word with the human nature, all His actions have an infinite value.

No pure creature nor any number of creatures could make an offering of equal value. The praise of the angels continued from the moment of their creation through the ages of all eternity, the praise of all the saints, their adoration, their thanksgiving, their prayers and intercessions—all vanish in comparison with the adoration, praise, thanks, prayers and atonement which, in one holy Mass, Christ offers to His heavenly Father.

It is the sacrifice of the Mass that, like a sun, pierces and illumines the whole service of God, that gives our homage its highest meaning and makes it worthy of the Most High; it is to this sacrifice that all the grades of holy Orders have reference, by which the servants of the sanctuary are raised step by step to the dignity of the priesthood.

The Church explains all that we have to consider in this matter when she says, that Mass is the same

sacrifice which Christ offered for us upon the cross, with only this difference, that it is not a bloody sacrifice. What a sight, what an impulse to praise and exultation must it not be for the angels when they look down upon the most holy Sacrament, which at every moment, in some part of the earth, is raised to heaven by the oblation of priests, to give thanks and praise to God, and to reconcile us to Him through our Lord Jesus Christ!

But if this is the case, oh how eager every child of the Church should be to assist daily, if possible, at holy Mass, and to unite his praise, adoration, prayer and atonement with the praise, adoration, prayer and atonement of Christ!

How fortunate we should deem ourselves that we are permitted to assist at the offering of this sacrifice, and—as the Church desires and demands of the faithful during Mass—to unite our acts and prayers spiritually with those of the priest! It is for this reason that St. Peter calls the Christians a sacerdotal people, although priests alone are permitted to say Mass.

How sad to think that so many children of the Church do not value this sacrifice, yes, do not even seem to understand it, and, therefore, do not endeavor to assist as often as possible, even daily, at Holy Mass, but must be forced by the commandment of the Church to hear Mass at least on Sundays and holydays! And even on these days, not a few stay away through shere carelessness or indolence, and others make the slightest inconvenience a pretext for absenting themselves.

But of those who assist at Mass, many by their willful distractions, their idle curiosity, their disrespectful behavior, offend God, even though they fulfill the command of the Church.

We can maintain, on the contrary, with certainty, that those—whoever they may be—that endeavor to assist every day devoutly at the Mass, will lead, in other respects, too, the life of true children of God, and walk the path of salvation without hesitation.

Hence, how becoming, how profitable would it be, if out of every family in the congregation, at least one member assisted each day at Mass! Streams of heavenly grace would then pour from the altar upon the whole congregation, conveying blessings for time and eternity, through Jesus Christ our Lord!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many."—Luke 14.

WE read in the Book of Esther that king Assuerus prepared so magnificent a feast that, perhaps, never before had there been, or was there afterwards one like it. It lasted for a hundred and four-score days. The princes and nobles of the land were invited to it, and during seven days all the people living in the capital partook of this truly royal banquet. Moreover, all that were asked by the king accepted the invitation.

Yet in the beautiful palace of the Catholic Church there is a still more magnificent table to which not only the princes of one kingdom and the people of one city are invited during one hundred and eighty days, but to which all the kings and all the nations of the earth have been invited for this last eighteen hundred years, and the invitation will last until the end of time.

This is the sacred table of God's altar, from which Holy Communion is distributed to the faithful of all nations. Christ Himself is there in the consecrated host really and substantially with flesh and blood, with divinity and humanity. When we reflect upon this truth, is it not sad to think that the Church has been forced within these last few centuries to make a commandment which obliges her children to receive the Most Holy Sacrament at least once a year, at Easter?

However, a true child of the Church needs no such command, but out of love for his Saviour receives Communion as often as possible.

O Mary, thou who through the Most Holy Sacrament hast remained in constant union with Christ, pray for us that we may hunger and thirst after a frequent and worthy reception of Holy Communion!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The Church celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi in the octave in which we now are, in order that she may inspire us with devotion to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

This Most Holy Sacrament is, in the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, a sacrifice, the sacrifice of the New Testament, the sun, so to speak, of our worship, around which all other acts of adoration revolve, and to which they bear relation.

The veneration of the Blessed Sacrament as a sacrifice can never be too great, or the zeal to hear Mass as often as possible, too fervid.

The same may be said of our devotion to the presence of Jesus Christ in this blessed Sacrament.

Christ's love is not satisfied when He offers Himself daily for us throughout the whole earth upon countless altars in this Sacrament; but it makes Him

desire to enter the hearts of every man who prepares to receive Him worthily.

There is scarcely any necessity of my trying to convince you that those who truly believe in our dear Saviour, and who love Him, need no commandment to urge them to receive Him in Holy Communion, for there is ever in their hearts a sweet longing to be with Jesus, to converse with Him, to have Him within their bosoms. Ah! but how much reason we have to regret the indifference of those who need a command, who need the exhortations of a priest to force them to receive Holy Communion?

In order to comprehend the happiness of receiving Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, we need only think of the antiphone which the Church pronounces by the lips of the priest when he administers Communion to the faithful: "*O sacrum convivium!*" O holy, threefold holy banquet, wherein Christ is received; the soul filled with graces, and the pledge of gaining everlasting life is given us!

Consider well: It is Christ Himself Whom we receive in Holy Communion. Can any thing more be needed to impress on the mind of one who believes in and loves Jesus, the great, yes, very great happiness Holy Communion bestows?

The same Jesus enters our heart whom the blessed Virgin conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and who in love and happiness reposed within her pure bosom, on her sacred and Immaculate heart. It is the same Jesus on whose breast St. John rested his head at

the last supper; the same Jesus Who died for us on the cross; the same Jesus Who at Easter rose gloriously from the dead, Who ascended into heaven, and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father!

What happiness to receive this same Jesus personally into our hearts! And not only this, but to unite ourselves to Him so intimately! The holy Fathers can find no words to adequately express this happiness. Thus we read:

"As light penetrates light, and air fills space—as wax is fused with wax, thus in Holy Communion the body of Christ unites with our body, His soul with our soul, His divinity with our humanity. Thus a worthy Communion places in our bosom the seed of a glorious transformation for the day of resurrection, and for our complete union with Christ in the joys of heaven."

This union of man with Christ in every Communion is an object of marvel, adoration, and astonishment, even for the angels, and hence a happiness which they justly envy us.

Besides this, how precious an opportunity this nearness, this union with Christ gives us of asking Him for graces Who is our Creator and Giver of every grace!

And when can His words and promise,—"All that you ask the Father in My name, will be given to you,"—be more surely or more perfectly fulfilled than at the moment when we receive Him into our hearts, and unite our prayers with His prayers and His infinite merits?

When therefore we consider the goodness and liberality of God in giving us Himself, how is it possible that the indifference of the children of the Church in regard to Holy Communion can be so great that the Church is forced to issue a commandment, which obliges every Christian to go at least once a year to the table of the Lord to receive the Blessed Sacrament?

Again I ask, how is it possible that there are Christians who do not even comply with this commandment, and thus expose themselves to the danger of losing that most precious gift which has been intrusted to each of them by their Creator, their immortal souls, not to speak of the disgrace which comes to their family, when after death they are denied Christian burial?

May I say: That the cause of this negligent observance of the commandments is generally found in the want of knowledge and love of Christ, and the lack of consideration of what faith teaches us in regard to Holy Communion, which we have just now contemplated.

Truly, indeed, if Isaiah exclaims: "With desolation is the world made desolate, because there is no one who thinks in his heart," we may with equal right exclaim and lament: "The Church is wounded by the indifference of her children in regard to receiving the Blessed Sacrament, because there is no one who thinks of the great happiness that is contained in it."

Some of us look upon Communion as a duty, instead of going with hearts burning with love, and longing to

be united to Him Who alone is worthy of our hearts' fondest affections. Our soul is therefore not prepared for Him, and we do not receive Holy Communion because we neither know nor love Him who died on the cross through love of us.

To-day's Gospel enumerates yet more reasons which detain the faithful from receiving frequently the Blessed Sacrament. These are temporal cares, an earthly mind, covetousness, sensuality, all of which deaden within us the desire of going to Holy Communion. These same vices have such a hold on us that even if we do receive Holy Communion, it is with indifference; and hence we derive but little benefit from it. We seem to look upon Christ in the Eucharist only with the eyes of our body. If we saw what Saint Stanislaus Kostka saw when the angels gave him the Blessed Sacrament, we would see how many thousands of them surround the altar, and also what takes place in the soul of him who receives when Christ enters it. Could we see all this, how longingly, filled with what burning desire we would approach the Lord's Supper.

There is, however, yet another reason why we receive Holy Communion with so little benefit. We are not grateful enough. And what is the cause of this ingratitude? I answer: The same earthly mind which has all its thoughts only fixed upon temporal possessions and pleasures; the same ignorance of God and of the love which He bears us.

The institution of the Blessed Sacrament points distinctly to the truth of what I say. Judas, after re-

ceiving Communion, left the supper-chamber to claim the money for which he betrayed Jesus.

Oh, how like him are those who, while they receive Christ, think more of their temporal affairs than of the thanks they owe to their God!

Saint John, the glorious disciple of love, rested on the breast of Christ. Oh, the happiness of all those Christians who lovingly profit by the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament!

They will be united to their Saviour already here upon earth, and will follow in His footsteps until their peaceful end. The words of Christ Himself assure us of this, for He says:

"Who eats of this bread will live by Me—he abideth in Me and I in him—he will have everlasting life."

Oh, angelic saint, who rested on the sacred heart of our Saviour, pray for us that we may be filled with thy love for Jesus, and that stimulated by it we may receive our dearest Saviour frequently in the Most Blessed Sacrament, until we are united to Him forever in heaven! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And he sent his servants to say to them that were invited that they should come." – Luke 14.

CHRIST, present in the Most Holy Sacrament, offers Himself in Holy Mass to His heavenly Father as a sacrifice of thanks, praise and adoration to the Holy Trinity, and also as a sacrifice of prayer and atonement for the human race, redeemed by His blood.

Besides this, He gives Himself to every child of His Church in this Sacrament through Holy Communion, and fills the hearts of those who are worthily prepared to receive Him. But not satisfied with this, He remains constantly in our midst, always ready to listen to us, and to bestow new graces upon us.

In the two preceding years, we considered two of the relations in which Christ stands to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

Let us meditate this year upon the third relation, and consider well the great and mighty fountain of grace which Christ left the children of His Church, in His continual presence in the tabernacle; let us consider the many urgent reasons we have to visit the Lord in this Sacrament.

O Mary, thou who hadst the happiness of dwelling for thirty years under one roof with Christ, pray for us, that we may understand and appreciate the favor bestowed upon us in this Sacrament, and obtain for us

grace to emulate, were it possible, thy love in the service of this Prisoner of Love!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"If thou didst know the gift of God, and who is He that speaketh to thee," said Jesus to the Samaritan woman at the fountain. The same words are addressed to every child of the Church from that tabernacle in which Christ in the Blessed Sacrament dwells.

The Samaritan woman knew Christ; she perceived that He was the promised Messiah, but she did not know Him as we do, we the members of His Church, enlightened by a fuller revelation. And notwithstanding this, she was admonished by Christ to value highly the happiness that had fallen to her lot.

When the Samaritan woman looked upon Christ, He stood before her under the form of a man; we see Him veiled in the form of bread, and confess, in the words of St. Peter, with living faith: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." God the Father had revealed this to him, which can not be said of the woman.

We children of the Church add to these words of the Apostle the words of the creed: God of God, true God of true God, who as God is infinite perfection, and through whose presence in the Blessed Sacrament this perfection is manifested with a magnificence and splendor that is revealed nowhere else in the universe. Here the Son of God, made Man for our sakes, loves

to dwell in the midst of His children. Here He is adored by the innumerable angels, who surround the tabernacle, prostrate in fear and trembling.

It is the same Jesus who became man for us, to redeem us from the curse of sin; the same Jesus who, for our sake, lived thirty-three years upon earth; who pointed out to us the path of salvation, in which we must walk; and who, as a final proof of His love, gave His blood for us upon the cross; who ascended before us to prepare us a home, that where He is there we may dwell with Him in eternal glory.

Who among us, enlightened by faith, does not say in his heart, with St. Augustine: "To have seen Christ upon earth is my greatest desire?" But, St. Augustine, your heart had surely another and more ardent desire than only to have seen Christ upon earth; you certainly also wished: Oh, that I had lived near Jesus, as the Apostles did and the disciples. And still another: Oh, that I had dwelt with the Lord under one roof, as the Blessed Virgin did; that I had spoken to Him, asked divine graces of Him.

This happiness we possess through the constant presence of Christ among us in the Most Holy Sacrament, in a more perfect manner than those who dwelt upon earth with Him.

No one had always an occasion to go to Christ, not even St. John the Baptist. He pointed to the Lord, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God," and then had to make his abode in the desert, while others followed Jesus; the will of God ordained it thus.

We may, if we but wish, be near Him at any hour of the day or night, for He dwells among us in the Blessed Sacrament. What a happiness, and at the same time what a demand upon us! Let us exclaim, in the words of the shepherds at the birth of Christ: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that is come to pass, which the Lord has showed to us." Wherever Christ dwells in the tabernacle, there is Bethlehem, there we are permitted to offer Him the adoration of our hearts, to converse with Him, to have intercourse with Him.

Hail every Christian, who benefits by the favor which the presence of Christ bestows, who visits Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, and opens his heart to Him! How easy it would be for us to talk to Him, present in the Blessed Sacrament, and to ask divine grace of Him. Is He not our God, Father, Redeëmer, Friend, Brother, and the Bridegroom of our souls?

Creature, have you nothing to say to your Creator? redeemed human being, have you nothing to say to your Saviour? child, have you nothing to say to your Father? brother, sister, have you nothing to say to your Friend, to the Bridegroom of your soul? In His hand lies the fate of your eternity. Pray especially that He may give you grace to follow Him, and become, so to say, changed into Him through those virtues to which the sacramental presence of Christ calls attention. These virtues are:

To renounce all temporal possessions, as far as they lead to inordinate worldly cares; to renounce the pas-

sion for pleasure and useless intercourse with man; the exercise of mortification; the sacrifice imposed by the virtues of patience and silence; meditation upon death, the Holy Viaticum, and our final union with Christ in heaven.

A Christian, well grounded in these virtues, will feel strong to fulfill all the duties of a zealous and worthy child of the Church.

Take this to heart, and determine upon a time to visit Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament. Would to God you were able to go daily. Zeal and faithfulness in the exercise of this devotion will lead you to know and love Christ, and will at the same time sanctify your life, and render you happy! Amen!

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners."—Luke 15.

THE Pharisees and Scribes murmured that Christ received sinners. And yet He came into this world only to save sinners and to free us from the curse that, since the fall of the first man, rests upon the human race, and to which every sinner adds so fearfully by his own personal sin.

Of course, God demands that man should co-operate, and earnestly make use of the means faith offers him for the salvation of his soul.

In this respect, the most necessary disposition on the part of man is confidence in God's goodness, a firm belief that it is possible for man, in the state of sin, however great and numerous his crimes, still to be saved; provided he is willing, with the help of grace, to fulfill the conditions that God demands.

Yes, yes, sinner—whoever you are and whatever sin you have committed—God desires your salvation. Throw yourself with confidence into the arms of His unbounded mercy.

O Mary, mother of mercy, mother of holy hope, bless us, and increase in us trust in God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"God wills that all men shall be saved." The first reason that the mind discovers for this truth, revealed by Scripture, flows partly from the nature of God Himself, and partly from the nature of an immortal being, such as man is.

God is in Himself the most perfect being, self-communicating Goodness, as theologians rightly affirm. Just as the nature of the sun, which is light, is to give forth light, so the nature of God, as infinite Goodness, is to communicate Himself to all His creatures; that is, to bless them and make them happy as far as their individual nature will allow.

Of course, this does not give to the rational creature a right to claim a supernatural union with God, and, still less, if he has torn himself away from God by sin; but the rational creature has not only the right but the duty to aspire after this union with the divine essence, if God deigned to grant it, as was the case with man at his creation.

Man is made after the image and likeness of God. He has in his soul the image of God, because he is an intelligent being, but the likeness he possesses only by union with the divine essence by means of sanctifying grace, a union, that will be perfected in heaven by the beatific vision.

It is true, by the fall of our first parents we lost this supernatural union with God, and, hence, every

claim on Him in the kingdom of glory; but as God, in His infinite goodness, redeemed us through the Incarnation of His Son, we regained the right and the happiness, according to the assurance of St. John, not only to be called children of God, but to be such in reality.

Hence, it is also God's will that we reach our final destination and possess it for evermore.

God is omnipotent and free, He can create intellectual beings or not. He is free; but He can not create them mortal—He can not again annihilate them; for He can not contradict His own nature, which would be the case did He create intellectual beings mortal; that is, only for a certain period of time, even were it more than a million of years. For in that case God would create such a reasonable being, either to be happy or to be unhappy. If He created it to be unhappy, He would be more cruel than any tyrant that ever existed upon earth; and if He created it to be happy, and then were to take this happiness from it, in order to annihilate it, He would be still more cruel; for such a being, living in accordance with God's holy will, would have the right to say: Lord, Thou hast created me without me; Thou hast made me happy, and now Thou robbest me of my happiness without deserving it; I do not give Thee thanks for my existence!

Such a reasonable being could use this blasphemous language to God the Creator, had He not created it to become and remain happy.

This desire of God to render man happy becomes

still clearer to us, when we think of the work of Redemption, and of the character of our union and beatification with God and in God, according to the order of grace.

The aim and end of the creation is the outward glorification of God by the manifestation of His infinite perfections. The angels in heaven reflect His holiness. The fate of the fallen angels shows forth the depth of His justice. The universe proclaims His greatness, His might, His wisdom and wondrous care in preserving what He created.

Man was to become, in His salvation, the object of the infinite mercy of God: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us." Rejoice, child of man, that you are human. If God had created you an angel, and you committed one single sin, you would have been lost for all eternity.

You are human, and, therefore, were you laden with all the sins of the world, you might yet be saved through Jesus Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, became Man for you, devoted to you every breath, every step of the thirty-three years of His stay upon earth, offered up for you every prayer, every hardship.

How dearly He bought you; for every act, every step of Christ is of such infinite value! But he who accomplishes something with great trouble, naturally does not wish to have labored in vain. This may be especially said of Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. Listen to His cry from the cross: "I thirst!" Your God and Redeemer thirsts for your salvation!

How your confidence will grow, if you, a child of the Catholic Church, think of the manner in which Christ made you a partaker of His indescribably great merits!

You are a child of that Church to which He gave all the means of salvation: Prayer, the Holy Sacraments, the sacrifice of the Mass, participation in the merits of all the saints in heaven and upon earth, and even of those of His own mother as patroness of the Church.

Besides this, think how many instructions, interior enlightenments, exhortations of parents, teachers, friends, Christ has bestowed upon you! This, my sermon of to-day, is a call of God to you, and a new impulse, a new means of salvation which He sends you. How many opportunities had you not in your life to hear Mass, to go to confession, and you have them still! If you, therefore, harden your heart and go to perdition, the reproach which, like a worm, will gnaw into your soul is this: *God desired my salvation, my misfortune I owe to myself alone*,—I did not desire to be saved.—Woe is me!

May this never be! Instead, say now, filled with confidence: God, Thou desirest it—and I—I desire also. I will save my soul!

Live in this disposition of mind, and show by your life that you are in earnest, and you will be saved through Jesus Christ our Lord!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"What man is there of you that doth not leave the ninety-nine sheep, and go after that which was lost until he find it?" Luke 15.

"GOD wills the salvation of all men," says the Apostle of the Gentiles. Should any one gifted with the use of reason fail to be saved, the blame, as well as the loss, will fall upon the unfortunate one.

But if any one, whether child or adult, dies without ever having had the use of reason, and before baptism was administered, his soul will enjoy a certain natural happiness, a state of immortality suited for rational creatures. What this state is, exceeds the limited range of our knowledge. St. Augustine wisely remarks that all speculations about it are useless, as revelation throws no light upon it.

Those who have attained the use of reason, and who misuse not their freedom in offending God, the Lord seeks to save, and to bring to their supernatural end, as Christ Himself assures us: "The Son of Man came into the world to seek what was lost."

Beloved in Christ, that we may not be lost through our own fault, let us to-day consider the means which God uses to bring back poor sinners from their evil ways.

O Mary, good shepherdess, thou who dost endeavor with tender care to bring strayed sheep to the Good

Shepherd, pray that the Lord may find us, and that no sin may again cause us to wander far away!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"What man of you," says Christ, "that has lost one sheep, does not leave the ninety-nine and go after that which was lost until he find it?" As though he said: You take it amiss that I pursue sinners, and lovingly embrace them. Know you not, Who I am, and Why I have come into this world? Even a shepherd seeks a lost sheep; and will you wonder and take it amiss that I, Who have taken upon Myself human nature, and have sacrificed My life from its first moments for each and every one of the children of men, and Who am willing to give for their salvation the last drop of My blood, should lovingly pursue sinful man, and try by all means to lead him back to God the Father?

What means does Jesus make use of to gain souls for heaven and for God?

To know these we need only glance at the parables which Christ makes use of in to-day's Gospel.

He speaks of a shepherd seeking a lost sheep. What is probably the first thing a shepherd does when he looks for his sheep? He raises his voice and calls his sheep. "The sheep," says Christ, "hear the voice of the shepherd; they know it, and follow him."

This refers also to Christ the Shepherd, who calls the lost sheep. The voices with which He calls, are the voice of nature, and the voice of that law which

He has written in every human heart: "Avoid evil; do good!"

Blessed the man who, living even in the darkness of heathenism, hears and follows this voice: the Lord will lead him to the knowledge of the truth before he leaves this world.

To these voices of nature and of conscience in the human heart, the entire outer world adds its voice: Serve your God! He has created me for you, and you for Himself!

St. Paul tells us that the heathens are inexcusable, if in contemplating the creation they nourish not and strengthen not in themselves the desire and the will to ask: Lord, Thou our God and Creator, what wilt Thou have me do?

"Serve your God," the world without us exclaims; "if you have not done so, repent and lead a better life."

To this call is further added the call of the primeval revelation which was made known to the human race, through Adam and Eve and through the Patriarchs, and which has been more or less perfectly preserved among all nations of the earth. To this voice was subsequently added the Word of the Lord spoken upon Mount Sinai; then the voices of the prophets were heard, and finally Christ Himself came into the world and announced the Word of salvation to mankind, which, re-echoed by the Apostles and their successors for the last nineteen centuries, is now heard over all the earth.

If men do not esteem, do not follow this voice, it is their own fault.

This is said especially to every erring Christian who once had the happiness of being a well-informed child of the true Church. If later on, such a person lose, apparently or really, the faith, yet whatever he has heard as a child, youth, or man, as maiden or woman, about religious truths, will some time or other resound in his breast, and call him to repentance.

In regard to those wanderers who still believe, and who living outwardly a Catholic life, say their prayers, visit the Church, attend jubilees and missions, approach at times the confessional, live in the society of pious Christians, see their example, hear their exhortations—manifold are the voices with which the Good Shepherd calls these lost sheep: Return! Let me find you!

This voice calls from the heights and the depths, in the valley and in the wilderness; that is, it calls in happiness and in misfortune, in good and in bad times, even during the trials of temporal cares, as, when harassed by them, man considers how senseless is the sacrifice of peace, of health, and even of a long life, for money, or temporal possessions.

Christ the Shepherd, however, calls after the lost sheep especially through the reproaches of conscience, which admonish the wanderer to say with the prodigal son: I will return to my Father; for Holy Writ says, that each sin carries its own punishment. There is not a sinner who is really happy even though

he has opportunities of satisfying all his evil inclinations. In spite of all, he is forced to recognize that, what he thought were joys, are only the husks with which Providence fills the swine—*i. e.*, sinners upon this earth, and a recompense for the little moral good which they perhaps did, and all the while his heart is compelled to sigh with Solomon: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" And why? St. Augustine answers to the point, when he says: "Thou hast, O God, created our heart for Thee, and it cannot rest, until it rests in Thee!"

But what will be the state of the sinner's soul when the stinging reproaches of conscience, compared by the heathen to furies scourging wicked men in hell, begin to torment the unhappy sinner? And surely the voice of conscience will be heard sooner or later.

To these voices may be added those exhortations which the second parable brings to our mind. We read that a careful housewife lit a light, swept the entire house, and moved every piece of furniture to find a lost coin.

Like to this is the case of the sinner who, illumined from on high by the consideration of the awful word "eternity," reflects upon his past conduct, and who, when by a merciful disposition of Providence his former circumstances change, and every thing is, so to speak, moved from its former position, is enabled to scrutinize in all earnest the folds of his heart.

Lovely are the paths on which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads back the lost sheep. Ask your own self.

Many a one has said to me: "Had I not come to America, and joined this very congregation in which I now have the grace to attend the mission, I believe I should have been lost for all eternity."

If you, who are assembled here, reflect upon your past life, you will, no doubt, be able to recall many an event which at the time seemed strange, perhaps incompatible with a merciful Providence, but which withal was the very means of your conversion.

This brings to my mind a remark, which one of my professors at the Vienna University expressed with much emphasis: "Gentlemen, he who does not see in his own life the Guiding Hand, and does not feel the manifold ways in which Providence endeavors to save him from eternal ruin, can be convinced by no professor of a university of the divine dispensations of Providence for the welfare of mankind." This merits consideration.

Lost sheep, are you here to-day? Thanks and praise be to God. This very sermon, this voice of a priest is the voice of the Lord calling you: O sheep of Christ, where are you? Let Christ find you! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner, that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just, who need not penance."—Luke 15.

IN the Gospel of to-day, Christ repeats the assurance that, in heaven, there is more joy over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just. These words are not only a justification of our Lord's behavior towards the Scribes and Pharisees, but they, at the same time, hold out to the sinner fresh inducements to leave off his evil ways, that the Lord may not seek him in vain.

Two other parables have the same object in view, and give no less ground for encouragement to the poor sinner. When our Lord speaks of the good shepherd, who so diligently seeks his lost sheep, and when He speaks of the woman, who ransacks her whole house in search of a lost groat, His words evidently bear the same purport. In both instances He speaks of the great joy that followed the successful search.

To-day, dear brethren, let us examine into the reasons why the angels rejoice at the conversion of the sinner.

To comprehend why it is that in heaven there is greater joy over the conversion of one sinner, than over ninety-nine just, who need not penance, we have only to consider the nature and character of the angels,

and, further, bear in mind the relation in which they stand towards God, and the relation in which the sinner stands towards God.

The angels are holy, and highly gifted spirits, who are forever united with God, and, as Christ Himself says, always see His face. They are good angels, because they stood the test of their freedom, and with the mighty Archangel Michael at their head raised the watchword: "Who is like to God!" They now see God face to face. They know with divinely communicated knowledge the end and aim of creation, which is the exterior manifestation of God's infinite perfections. They love and serve their Creator, and, therefore, desire, above all things, His extrinsic glory, and the beatification of rational creatures by the clear vision of His essence, for which they were designed in the eternal decrees of His providence. They were seized with awe and fear at the awful display of His holiness and justice called forth by the sin of their brethren! As St. John says in the Apocalypse: "A great silence reigned in heaven."

On man, however, God wished to show forth His infinite mercy, yet so that all His other perfections would be manifested with still greater magnificence, and, moreover, in such a manner that the exaltation, glory and happiness of the angels would proportionally increase.

Hence, even at the birth of the divine Child, from Whom Redemption was to come for fallen man, the angels sang so joyfully their hymn of praise—a hymn

that changes into loud hallelujahs of joy and benediction when the effectual grace of conversion is communicated to a soul; and the deeper her fall has been, the more hopeless her case appeared, the greater is the joy of the angels. And the reason of this is, because then not only the infinite mercy of God triumphs, but all His other attributes radiate with special glory.

For, what is it that God forgives? It is sin. But sin, in relation to God, is so great an evil, that, were He to forgive one man but a single mortal sin, it would still be an act of boundless mercy, so great is the inferiority of the offender to the One offended. Now, however, God forgives the contrite sinner each and every sin.

What a source of joy for the angels is this return of the sinner to God, since, as has already been said, all the attributes of the divine nature shine forth therein with wonderful splendor!

First, His Omnipotence, as the Church declares in her prayer: "O God, Thou, Who revealest Thy Omnipotence most through Thy forbearance!"—It is the power of grace that raises the sinner from the abyss of hell and snatches him from the grasp of Satan.

What a manifestation, likewise, of God's omniscience, goodness, veracity and fidelity in the sinner's conversion! It is his omniscience that knows what the sinner will do under these or those circumstances, with this or that grace, and he selects that grace which will effectually bring about his conversion.

His wisdom also is shown; for it is His wise providence that conducts the sinner by such ways, and brings him into such circumstances, that he finally thinks of returning to God and carries out his resolve.

His patience and long-suffering is glorified; for it is by this attribute that He forbears judging the sinner and casting him into the depths of hell at the first offense, as He did the angels; but labors at his conversion for years, preserves his life though tainted by many crimes, feeds and clothes him, heaps temporal blessings upon him, and puts the means of salvation at his disposal.

But instead of thanking God for His goodness, the sinner uses these very favors to outrage Infinite Majesty, and still more grievously to add sin to sin. If, then, we bear in mind what an abomination sin is to God, how much He detests ingratitude, we can not sufficiently admire His patience and longanimity in waiting for the sinner's conversion, even till old age weighs upon him, and the pangs of death overtake him. Has He not said by the mouth of the Prophet: "I will not the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live?"

The angels witness all these effects of God's mercy, and when, at length, the sinner returns to His loving Father, they rejoice and break forth in praise and thanksgiving.

Even the manner of the sinner's reconciliation and reception is a subject of joy for the angels.

Let us call to mind how the father of the prodigal

received his ungrateful son. God's mercy demands of the sinner only a confession of his guilt, and that only to His representative, in the Sacrament of penance. If the sinner kneels at the priest's feet with a contrite heart, and the words of absolution are pronounced over him, how the angels rejoice to see the shackles of sin fall from his hands, to see the gates of hell close and the portals of heaven swing open! They praise the power of God's sanctifying grace, which transforms the sinner from a child of the devil into a child of God rivaling the angels in beauty; they exult over the prospect that this soul, readmitted to the friendship of God will henceforth acknowledge His goodness by the holiness of her life, magnify Him on earth and afterwards in heaven, augment day by day the glory that will recompense her in the life to come.

What a subject of joy for the guardian angel of that soul!

May every sinner who now listens to me rejoice by a return to God, his guardian angel, and the whole heavenly host!—Amen!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"Master, at Thy word I will let down the net."—Luke 5.

THOSE who have the happiness of being children of the Church of God, and of being instructed in the teachings of faith, know that their lives end not in this world, but that they shall live in heaven as in their home, and that there they will be glorified according as they shall have acquired merits in this life for eternity.

The child of the Church, who bears this in mind, is anxious to know what is necessary that his works may really produce the effect of acquiring and increasing these merits for heaven, and what it is that gives them value before the judgment-seat of Christ. To-day's Gospel will inform him on this matter. In it St. Peter says:

"Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net."

He did so, and, when he drew it up, it was overloaded with fishes.

It is a mistake to think that we are not placed in such circumstances as to be able to enrich ourselves with treasures for heaven after the manner of the saints.

Whatever be our position, whatever the persons with whom we have to live, numberless opportunities are offered us to this end by our daily duties, if only we perform them as the saints did theirs, and as the words of St. Peter teach us to perform them.

Let us, therefore, consider well the lesson contained in the words: "At Thy word I will let down the net."

O Mary, Mother of the Divine Word, thou, who by thy virtuous deeds hast surpassed all men, Mirror of Justice, obtain for us the grace from God to serve Him meritoriously, and thus to increase our glory!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

If our life is to produce abundant fruit for heaven, we must work, not from temporal motives merely, but from such as were revealed to us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

We must work, not in our own name, not from worldly considerations, but as the Word of God commands us, in the most holy name of Jesus.

To understand this more fully, we need only to reflect for a moment on the meaning of this sacred name, and of whom and of what it reminds us.

The name "Jesus" means "Salvation," and to do our work in this name is to have, after God, no other end in view in all our actions than our eternal salvation.

"For what doth it avail a man," says Christ, "if he gains the world and loses his soul?"

We can obtain our salvation only, when, in all that we do, we have no other intention, no other aim, no other rule of conduct, than to fulfill the most holy will of God as far as we can learn it by the light of faith.

St. Peter fished in the darkness of night, but without success; so, also, the works of those are of no value for eternity who walk in the darkness of infidelity or of heresy, or who live in mortal sin, deprived of the light of sanctifying grace.

Unfortunately, it is only too often the case that we are not in the state of grace while working, that we do not labor with the right intentions, and in the required manner. In order to avoid this, we should, at break of day, unite our intentions with those of our Saviour in words like these: "Lord, as Thou wilt, and for Thy sake only; O Jesus, only to glorify Thee, and to follow Thy holy example in the exercise of all the virtues for which this day may afford me opportunities."

But that we may really have these intentions, we must, with all humility and confidence, seek aid from our Lord Himself; we must acknowledge and confess before Him: Lord, I am weak, and dare hardly hope to be able to overcome, by myself, the temptations and hinderances that Satan will place in my way. But I cast out the net of my work at Thy word, and in Thy name. In Thee I put my trust.

How mighty, O Lord, is Thy name! All great and noble deeds that were done these eighteen hundred years in Thy name, and are related in the history of

Thy Church, or in the lives of Thy saints, give testimony, of its power.

But if these were able to do such things, why shall not I as well, who enjoy the same happiness with them of belonging to the true Church?

Art Thou not the same Jesus yesterday, to-day, and forever? Was Thy word: "All that you ask the Father in My name will be given you," not spoken to me also? And is not Thy consoling promise given to me also: "Behold I shall remain with you until the end of the world?"

In this Thy holy name all sources of divine grace are opened to me, especially that of union with Thee in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Thy presence in the boat enlivened the confidence of St. Peter. Thou, O Lord, the same Jesus, art present also in my heart as often as I receive Thee in Holy Communion, and Thou art continually with me in Thy tabernacles.

Trusting, therefore, in Thee, I cast out the net of my daily work at Thy word, and in Thy name.

If we act in this manner, my brethren, we shall obtain strength for our work, strength against all temptations, strength to overcome the difficulties which Satan may spread on our path.

Our support lies principally in our union with Jesus in the inner life—by communion with Him in prayer, by our eagerness and fidelity in visiting Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, and by frequently and worthily approaching the Holy Table, which especially enkin-

dles, increases and nourishes the fire of divine love in our hearts.

Blessed are we if we have done these things, if we know from experience the meaning of those words of St. Paul: "The love of Christ urges me." For, as David says: "A fire has been kindled in my meditation."

At Thy word, and in Thy name, O Lord, out of love to Thee, I cast out the net of my daily work.

We shall, then, not rest satisfied with only doing that which me must, according to right and duty, in order to save our souls; but we shall endeavor to increase our eternal happiness by fervor in the exercise of all virtues, and by causing others to imitate our example, with the same fervor, to save and sanctify their souls.

If, therefore, while we work, while we strive to perform our duties, we acquire but little merit for heaven, what is the cause of it? It is the want of a good intention, the want of zeal and solicitude to do as the name and the example of Jesus admonish us to do. It is the want of confidence in Him, and of union with Him through prayer and Holy Communion. In a word, it is the want of love for Jesus.

How important, therefore, is the admonition to make our lives such that they will be to us no deception, but a source of merit for the kingdom of Retribution, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And they beckoned to them that they should come and help them."—Luke 5.

IN to-day's Gospel we are told that St. Peter, and those with him, called on those in the other ship to assist them in the labor of drawing out the net full of fishes. Now of what was this fishing typical? It was, according to the word of Christ, but an image of that great work which is to bring all mankind within the one true fold. This our Lord clearly pointed out to the Apostles, when He said: "I will make you fishers of men." And it was for this very purpose that He sent them forth to convert the world, and so assigned their tasks, that His bishops and priests might continue their work to the end of time. The succession to that grand mission has never been interrupted in the Church, and it never will be until the world shall have passed away.

But is this work reserved to the bishops and priests alone? Are they the only ones obliged to labor for the salvation of souls? Not at all. It is a duty incumbent on all. Each and every child of the Church is laid under this obligation, for to each and every one are addressed these earnest words: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And, in consequence of this command, all Christians are bound to do their share in the good work of converting souls, inasmuch as these

other words are addressed to them likewise: "What ye wish that men should do unto you, do ye also to them." We all know how true this is in the temporal order. And if we desire so eagerly to be assisted by our neighbor in what merely pertains to this present life, how much more so should we not do the same in what regards the life to come, and be ready to assist him in every possible way!

To this end let us consider to-day the many potent reasons which should urge us to labor for the salvation of souls.

O Mary, Queen of the Apostles, obtain for us, that we, like the first Christians, may be animated by the holiest zeal!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first reason which should lead us to kindle and nourish in our hearts this holy zeal is *love* of God. And why so? It is because the soul is the image of God. From all eternity did the great Lord of all think of it. He created it for Himself, enabling it, by the fulfillment of His holy will, to glorify Him on earth, and thus to be united to Him in life eternal.

God then, no doubt, wishes, with all earnestness, that every soul may stand the test to which her freedom is subjected in the trials of this life. What an inducement, for every one that loves God, to strive with might and main that every soul do in reality prove

true, and glorify God in time and in eternity! From this we see that he who loves God heartily, is most anxious to have all around him sharers with himself in loving, serving and praising the Father of all. But he knows full well that this will not come to pass unless they are, like himself, children of the Church, and enlightened by the same faith.

And hence his one great desire is to have others know and serve God, since he is aware that not to know and serve God is to know and serve Satan. He who is not a child of our heavenly Father, is a child and follower of the evil spirit; and, as such, his reward in the life to come will be eternal perdition. Alas! that there should be any so foolish!

The second great reason which we have to cultivate religious zeal is *love of Christ*. Why did He come upon the earth? It was to save souls. "The Son of man came to seek that which was lost," says our Lord Himself. The history of His stay among men tells us how He did this. His whole life was sacrificed to this one object, and an ignominious death gave a last proof of how much He valued human souls. Can we wonder, then, that Christ is most anxious to see His many sufferings bear fruit? Will we be callous to His wishes? He deigns to ask for our help in the saving of souls! Is not this enough to win from us our best efforts? Let us not refuse so loving a Lord, but do our best to augment the number of the blessed of heaven, thus giving new glory to Christ for all eternity.

Just consider what it is for men to be unbelievers, or unreligious, or the slaves of mortal sin! St. Paul assures us that they continually crucify Jesus in their hearts. Then, again, see what harm they do. They scandalize others; and, by doing the devil's work, increase the number of the damned! Is not this sad? "Lord, give me souls, souls," was the constant cry of St. Francis Xavier. It should be ours also.

A third great reason is *love of Mary*, the mother of divine grace, who stood at the foot of the cross suffering as no one of the children of men had ever suffered, or will ever suffer. Her sacrifice was none other than the offering of her Son to the Eternal Father. She knew the divine desire of Jesus to save souls, and hesitated not to satisfy that desire as far as it lay in her power to do so.

Should not the example of our dear heavenly Mother move us, her children, to lend our aid in bringing about so happy a result as the salvation of men? By doing so, we shall prove ourselves her devoted children, and grateful for the numberless blessings which she has obtained for us from her divine Son.

And if, besides all this, we bear in mind the love which should be ours for the angels and saints, we can not fail to increase in our souls this same religious zeal. For it is plain that the greater the number of the blessed in heaven, the greater will be the joy and exultation of all. Hence it belongs to us to increase that number by leading sinners into the right path, and by keeping ourselves pure and holy in the sight

of God. We are brothers of the saints. What they have done, we should endeavor to do also; and as they labored while on earth to gain souls to Christ, we should not be backward in imitating their glorious example.

Besides the reasons given, are there not others that come nearer home to us—reasons which spring from the consideration of our own real interests? Love of self should urge each of us to labor at the gaining of souls to Christ. And why so? Simply because we will thus gain a great reward in the life to come. St. Chrysostom, alluding to the merit which is secured by works of religious charity, says that: "A work of spiritual charity, done for the salvation of souls, has a higher value in the eyes of God, than if a man were, at one and the same time, to feed the hungry, nurse the sick, and befriend the fatherless, in every part of the world."

The Holy Ghost assures us of the same thing by the mouth of the prophet Daniel: "They who instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity."

Do we desire to save our own souls? Let us labor to save others, and we shall succeed in saving our souls also; for he "who saves the soul of another," say the Holy Spirit, "has saved his own."

And this should not seem strange to us. For if Christ, speaking of the corporal works of mercy, assures us that He will say to those who practise them, come and take possession of the kingdom prepared for you, how much more so will He not have reason

to address the same words to those who perform the spiritual works of mercy? May we not say that for such there will be a heaven within a heaven, where they will partake of the fullness of joy in company with those whom they have saved? Nay more, will not their joy be the overflowing joy of souls inundated by the wine of gladness poured out on them? Our Lord and His blessed Mother will never forget what they did to help them in winning souls to God.

Let us frequently consider these motives; and let us earnestly beg that a truly apostolic zeal, born of the love of God, of Jesus, of Mary, and of all the saints, as well as of the real interests of our own souls, may come and take possession of our hearts, and cause us to labor much for the spiritual welfare of the neighbor! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"From henceforth thou shalt catch men."—Luke 5.

TO-DAY'S Gospel reminds not only the servants of the sanctuary of the duty to exercise religious zeal, but also every truly loyal child of the Church.

The words: "From henceforth thou shalt catch men," are addressed through the commandment of brotherly love to every one who, enlightened by faith, knows that there is but one name, but one Church, in which and through which we can be saved.

This commandment and this knowledge obliges every child of the Church to do all that lies in his power that every person may attain to the knowledge of this only true Church, and to strive that those who are children of the same, may live according to the dictates of their faith. Unfortunate, indeed, is the lot of those who, with the light of the true faith shining down on them, walk not in the ways of truth and virtue. For, the divine graces which they, as children of the Church, received, but misused, become millstones, that will drag them into the abyss of perdition, and the greater these graces were, the deeper down will they be dragged.

It may, perhaps, be asked: *How can any Christian, even though he be not a priest, save souls, catch men for the kingdom of God? What net is at hand for every one to fish for souls?*

O Mary, Mother, teach us, thy children, to take care of others, that, being thine, we may all serve God, fulfill His holy will, and enter into His kingdom!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"At Thy word, Master, I will let down the net," said St. Peter, hoping that his fishing would prove successful, and every child of the Catholic Church may say this with him.

The question now is, of what must the net consist, in order that the fishing be possible or successful?

I will point out, to-day, the threads of which this net is knitted.

The first condition necessary to cause others to acknowledge the truth and divinity of faith, or to make them live in accordance with the dictates of faith, is *our own example*.

"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your works and praise your Father who is in heaven," Christ Himself exhorts us.

One might quote, in reference to this, the words of the ancient Roman poet, who says: "If thou wishest me to grieve, thou must first weep thyself." Thus also: If thou wilt that I shall lead a Catholic life, then live thou like a Catholic, and prove the divinity of thy faith by thy life—distinguished by its virtues from that of all other people.

We read in the life of the seraphic St. Francis, that he, one day, invited one of the lay brothers to

go out with him. "Come, we will preach," said he. They went through the whole city in their poor habits, with their eyes cast down in deep meditation, and returned thus to the monastery. When they arrived there, the lay brother said, with much astonishment, to the saint: "Father, didst thou not say we were going out to preach?" "Yes," replied the saint, "and we have done it. Behold, the people who saw us in our poor habits knew that, formerly, we lived in the world and were wealthy, that we left all for the love of God; this sight was a powerful sermon to tear their hearts from attachment to the goods and riches of this world."

Would to God that every father and mother, every youth and maiden, lived the holy life our faith demands of the children of the Church! Thus the first Christians lived, and their virtuous life attracted the attention of the heathens. These first admired the lives of the Christians, then examined their creed, became convinced and converted.

Oh, how many irreligious and unbelieving men in our day, especially here in America, and to a greater or less degree every-where, would do the same, if all children of the Church lived as holy faith teaches them to live!

If all the Catholics here in America lived a holy life in accordance with their duty as children of the Church—all America would soon be Catholic. And among Catholics themselves, how many souls would be saved! how the net would be filled with human

souls, if, in every family, man, wife and children sanctified each other by word and example!

But, on the other hand, how much evil is done in a family by the bad example of one single person! Beside neglecting prayer himself, cursing and blaspheming instead, he prevents the other members of the family from praying with devotion, and also gives them occasion for impatience and anger. The same may be said of negligence in hearing Holy Mass, in receiving the Sacraments, in attending divine service generally. His example only too often even prevents the conversion to the Church of the irreligious and unbelieving. Such a sinner resembles a sword-fish, that destroys the net.

The second condition, the second thread for the apostolic fishing-net, useful likewise for laymen, is called *instruction*, instruction in matters of faith; not to be satisfied with learning the Catechism only so far as to be admitted to Holy Communion, but to be instructed, each and every one, as thoroughly as, according to Holy Writ and the sermons of the holy fathers, the first Christians were.

How very deficient are the children of the Church in this regard! And yet how easily might the defect be supplied, and every one be sufficiently instructed, since the press, many schools, books of instruction, and controversial writings, offer numberless opportunities for information! It is the duty of parents to introduce them into their families.

The effect of this care on the part of parents would

be that the growing generation, and people of maturer years, too, would not only remain firm in their faith, but would be able to instruct others, and give an account of every article of the faith.

The third thread of the apostolic fishing-net, is the care to make those professing another faith acquainted with these instructive books. If every Catholic would place a book of this kind into the hands of an unbeliever or follower of a false creed, our holy religion would be better known, and many brought into the bosom of the Church.

But Catholics are very negligent in this matter, while Protestants give it all their attention. Seductive pamphlets, and books against the Catholic faith, are distributed by the hundred thousands; millions of dollars are spent on their publication, and they are offered to every one who cares to read!

Unfortunately, in this regard, also, is verified the assurance and lament of our Lord: "The children of darkness are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Finally, the last thread of the apostolic fishing-net is *prayer*, to which we must resort that God's arm may second our endeavors, for to lay the foundation of faith and effect a conversion is the work of divine grace; and the means God gave us to obtain grace is "prayer."

The greatest inducement to cast out our net in the name of the Lord, in spite of discouragements and difficulties, is the remembrance of the terrible account

we must render if any soul has, through our negligence, gone to eternal perdition. Woe to us, if this be the case! Therefore, let us cast out our net to catch souls, that we may secure our own salvation!—Amen!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"For I say to you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and of the Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." —Matt. 5.

AMONG the persons who were hostile to Christ—who despised and calumniated His teachings, and at last roused the people to such a height of frenzy that they crucified Him, the Gospel mentions the following four classes: the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Sadducees, and the priests of the Old Testament.

The Pharisees, however, were the principal ones who worked against our Lord, and their opposition was especially dangerous, because the people were deceived by their hypocrisy, mistaking it for true piety and virtue.

They honored the Pharisees as defenders of the law of Moses, and received from them the doctrine that God was its author, although the Pharisees derogated from the power and holiness of the sacred volumes by voluntary additions which they called traditions.

Christ calls them whitewashed sepulchers, vipers; but most frequently, *hypocrites*.

There are, alas! many children of the Church who

resemble the Pharisees, and whose Catholic exterior is only deception, hypocrisy.

To see the truth of this accusation we need but compare the manner of life of the Pharisees with that of these Christians.

O Mary, mirror of justice, inspire us with an earnest desire to live in true holiness!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Christ warns His disciples against the spirit of the Pharisees. He calls them hypocrites, whitewashed sepulchers, men who are satisfied with honoring God outwardly, but who are inwardly filled with egotism and pride; enemies of truth, men without genuine brotherly love.

How many who call themselves children of the Church, unfortunately bear the same characteristics! They deserve the reproach of Christ: Hypocrites!

This reproach all those deserve who are satisfied with fulfilling outwardly the duties of a child of the Church, while in their hearts they are not children of God but of the devil, living as they do in the state of mortal sin. They say their morning and evening prayers, visit the Church, assist in body at the holy sacrifice of the Mass; but though they may deceive man, they can not deceive God. Their prayers are mere words; their heart concurs in nothing that their lips

utter; on the contrary, their life is a contradiction of every protestation they make in prayer.

But this is not all; these nominal Christians even dare to approach the Holy Eucharist. Their confessions are deceptions, and they deserve the reproach, "hypocrites," for their repentance is only on their lips; in their heart, after confession, they are as great sinners as they were before it, and their Communion is a sacrilege.

All they strive after is to make others believe that, as Christians, they live in the state of divine grace, and that they sanctify themselves by the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. Hence, their life as Christians is literally: "hypocrisy."

Catholics living thus deserve to be called what Christ called the Pharisees: "Whitewashed sepulchers." They appear outwardly religious and devout, make the sign of the cross, yet in their heart they crucify the Lord, and live thus year after year.

Does not a Christian living in this manner deserve the reproach: Pharisee! Hypocrite!

Alas! who can doubt that the greater part of the children of the Church endeavor to appear better than they really are? But for this reason, they generally bear also the other marks for which Christ reproves the Pharisees.

They are deficient in love of truth; they hide their wickedness from themselves and others; they merely affect a desire to know God's will, and serve Him in truth.

The Pharisees but seldom approached Christ to hear the Word of Truth. They derided those who, filled with astonishment, exclaimed: "Never did man speak like this man!" They said with pride and contempt: "Which of us hears Him?"

And when they listened to the Lord it was only to scoff at His doctrine, not to recognize it and to live in accordance with its precepts.

It is the same with these Catholics that affect piety. They say with their lips: I believe, while their conduct gives their words the lie. They are loath to hear the Word of God, and if, at times, they listen to a sermon in order to keep the reputation of being Christians, then they criticise what they hear, and apply it to others, not to themselves.

We shall understand this hypocrisy better if we recall some of the principal dogmas of our holy faith, which exercise the most influence upon our life as children of God.

Faith teaches us that we are upon earth only pilgrims preparing ourselves for an approaching eternity. Every Christian, as such, confesses this with his lips; but what does his life say? If it contradicts his statement, it shows him to be guilty of deception.

Only too frequently the Christian's most strenuous exertions are not directed to the acquisition of treasures for heaven, but rather to accumulate riches for his earthly existence, and to enjoy them as long as possible. He is a whited sepulcher, a pharisee!

The sinner acknowledges, as a Christian, that man

must be in the state of grace, in order to gain merits for heaven, and that, according to the holy will of God, he must fulfill the duties of his station with the right intention, and to the best of his ability. He acknowledges this with his lips, but what does his life say? It contradicts him, and lays bare his falsehood. He lives in sin, and what he does is not done because it is the will of God, but because it is his own good pleasure. He is a whited sepulcher, a pharisee!

The sinner acknowledges, as a Christian, the number and greatness of the dangers that threaten his salvation; he repeats the words of the Lord: "Many are called; but few are chosen," yet he lives as carelessly as if no danger existed for his salvation. He is a liar, a whited sepulcher, a pharisee!

He confesses with his lips that there is a God who will one day judge him, that an eternity awaits him, an eternity either of inexpressible happiness, or of never-ending torment; and yet all these truths exercise no influence upon his life. He has no love of truth. He is a pharisee!

The Pharisees prayed and gave alms, but only to be seen by men and to please them. In their hearts they were full of malice, and without love for their neighbor. They especially persecuted those who told them the truth openly as Christ did, and for this, overcome by envy and hatred, they crucified Him.

How many who call themselves Christians, and who, as such, pray, and knowing the commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," do not care in the

least for either the bodily or spiritual welfare of their neighbor, but think only of themselves and of their own individual well-being!

All who live in such a manner, who have such a disposition, merit the reproach: hypocrite! pharisee!

On the whole, how very few Christians exist who do not desire to appear better than they really are; and how many deserve the reproach of Christ which we find in the Apocalypse: "Thou hast the name that thou livest, but thou art dead!"

You Christian, you who live otherwise than you profess before men, the name you deserve is: hypocrite, pharisee, whited sepulcher!

From to-day love truth, and follow it earnestly in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"For I tell you, that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5.

THE Pharisees were zealots of the law which Christ came to fulfill; but notwithstanding an exterior show of reverence and obedience, in reality they dishonored and disobeyed that law by acting against its spirit.

Unfortunately, there are also among the children of the Church many who profess to recognize the divine origin of the Church, and pretend to love and reverence her; but it is only deception, and they, too, deserve to be termed: "hypocrite!"

Their life gives the lie to their words. They are not truthful, they are not honest, they are not sincere; they never reflect seriously, nor inquire earnestly as to how they must live in order to be able to call themselves, in the presence of God, children of Christ's Church, with the hope of one day entering as such into the joys of eternal life.

But not only this, there are even in our days men who pretend to be Christians, yet are, in truth, worse than the Pharisees.

O Mary, thou whom Elizabeth called blessed, because thou didst not only believe, but didst live in accordance with thy belief, pray for us, that in our efforts

after true holiness of life we may receive the spirit of the true children of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

I say: There are, unfortunately, many children of the Church who have great reason to take to heart the warning of Christ: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," which is hypocrisy, mock-holiness.

Many who call themselves Catholics do not seek the truth in earnest, and consequently have no real charity in their hearts either towards God or their neighbor. They are satisfied with an external fulfillment of the exercises of devotion, and of the natural duties of politeness to their neighbor, and hence they appear to be much better than they really are.

In our day the evil is still greater, and is spreading with fearful rapidity. There are men who, born of Catholic parents, baptized in the Catholic Church, brought up, perhaps, in the Catholic faith, live in utter neglect of the commands of God; nay, they have long since forgotten them; they do not hesitate to deny the existence of God and all revelation. These are they whom the Apostle in his Epistle to the Thessalonians calls: "Apostate from faith in faith;" and he gives this state as one of the signs of the coming antichrist.

The Pharisees at least prayed, and made a show of devotion, in order to gain the esteem and good-will of others; but there are in our day men calling them-

selves Christians and Catholics who, from year's end to year's end, never say a prayer. They know not what prayer is; they never think of God, and say, impudently: Man, help thyself; and then God will help thee! There is no Providence! They never mention the name of the Lord, except in cursing and blasphemy, and who knows how often they do this every day?

The Pharisees *at least kept the Sabbath*, and in this way at least made some external declaration of their faith in God, and in His revelation; but now there are men calling themselves Christians and Catholics who neglect the reverence due to the Lord's day. They work on it as on any other day, and if perforce they abstain from labor, Sundays and holydays are spent in idleness, drinking and riot, so that on these very days which the Lord has reserved to Himself as time sacred to prayer and good deeds, He is offended more than on all the others of the week. Sunday is not spent in the service of God, but in the slavery of the devil. Christians who so act are much worse than the Pharisees.

The Pharisees *at least visited the temple;* but there are Christians—they call themselves Catholics—who, for months, yes, years, do not go inside of a church, who assist once in a while at Holy Mass, never hear the Word of God, and never approach the sacred table, where they may be nourished and sustained to resist the attacks of their spiritual enemies.

The Pharisees *sometimes fasted*, and performed works

of mortification. In our days there are Christians—they call themselves Catholics—who, far from fasting, or performing any work of self-abnegation, live in the unrestrained enjoyment of every sensual gratification; "whose God," as St. Paul already complained, "is their belly;" who, far from edifying their neighbor, give scandal by drinking and dancing in bar-rooms and low dancing-halls.

The Pharisees *at least gave alms*, although they did it only to attract attention, and to acquire the reputation of being charitable. There are to-day men that call themselves Christians and Catholics who heartlessly turn away all the poor from their door, or withhold from the workman his well-earned wages, although they pretend to take a great interest in suffering humanity, and are ever ready with loud protestations of philanthropy.

The Pharisees *at least aided by their offerings the temple and its servants.* But in our time there are Christians, calling themselves Catholics, who do nothing for the Church and her ministers, and in this respect, also, they are far worse than the Pharisees.

Instead of helping to spread God's kingdom, they persecute it in all possible ways, and they would entirely exterminate it from the earth had they the power to do so. They not only do nothing themselves for the Church and her ministers; but when they see others willing to give, they laugh at them, and endeavor to prevent them. These men, though they call themselves Catholics, wish, in their hearts, that there were

no churches, nor priests nor schools, so that they might, with a safer conscience, escape the burthen of maintaining them.

They call themselves Christians, Catholics, and yet they join secret societies, whose only aim, only work, is to destroy the Church and Christianity. They spend their time in reading frivolous, godless books and pamphlets, and miserable newspapers, which slander, deride and ridicule the Church! Oh, what blindness!

To inexperienced youth especially, is intercourse dangerous with this class of nominal Christians, these whited sepulchers.

When men who are not children of the Church by baptism deride and slander her and her ministers, and her doctrines, the evil is not half so great as when it is done by those who pretend to be Christians, who have once led a Christian life, but who have run into the errors of unbelief, and have ranged themselves under the standard of infidelity.

Woe to all who live thus, and call themselves Catholics! On the day of judgment they will fare worse than the Pharisees! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 5.

HOW earnest is the admonition of Christ in to-day's Gospel! It is a threat of the coming Judge: "You shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

What a threat, did it even only concern the loss of heaven; for, what a pitiful state not to see God, not to be united to Him, and not to partake of His infinite bliss; to be deprived of the communion of the angels and saints, and of the possession and enjoyment of all created pleasures! This is not all, however; for, if we enter not heaven, what remains to us? Answer: "Hell!"—Great God, what a threat!

How important it is, therefore, for us to know what our justice must be to surpass that of the Pharisees, and give us the right and the hope to gain heaven, and escape the danger of eternal destruction!

I say: To comprehend this, we need only consider the opposite of what Christ blames the Pharisees for, namely:

If we practice those virtues which are the opposite of the faults and sins of the Pharisees, our justice will be greater than theirs, and will not be hypocrisy, but truth.

O Mary, thou who, with the entire truthfulness of thy love to God, didst fulfill His holy will, bless our

longing to secure our salvation by the practice of true justice!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Hypocrisy is that for which Christ especially reproaches the Pharisees; that they endeavor to appear other than they really are, and that they do not love truth.

Already the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, called them "vipers," and in a like manner the complaint and reproach of another John, St. John the Evangelist, is addressed to them, when he says: "Men loved darkness rather than the light." Why? "Because," as Christ says, "their works were evil." They were whited sepulchers.

Behold now, on the contrary, in what justice consists, that true justice which opens the gates of heaven to us!

It is the *love* of truth and the *desire* to know it, to put it in practice with candor and simplicity of soul.

He who seeks truth earnestly will find it, and when he has found it he will prize it highly, and will open his heart that it may therein find an abode. Hence, St. Paul, speaking of the armor of God, mentions, especially, the girdle of truth.

To understand more clearly how important is the love of truth, we have only to think how powerful is the influence on our lives of those truths that holy faith places before our eyes in regard to our last aim

and end, what a light they shed upon our path, and how potent are the means of salvation which God has given the children of His Church to serve Him truly, and to fulfill with determination, energy and fidelity, His most holy will!

But that this effect may in reality be produced, we must not confess the truths of our holy faith only with the lips, but we must ponder them with earnest attention.

Jeremias already complained: "With desolation is all the land made desolate; because there is none that considereth in his heart." How powerfully holy faith would admonish us to follow Christ with the zeal of the saints, did we but seek truth with a yearning heart!

"Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile," said Christ of Nathanael. Would to God that this could be said of every child of the holy Church; but alas, in this respect many are woefully deficient!

We believe, but we do not *consider* earnestly enough the influence faith ought to exercise upon our lives, in order that our belief may be meritorious, and our lives correspond with it.

The life of the Pharisees was a life of *habit*, it was a life which rested on the appearance rather than on the practice of virtue. They contented themselves with fulfilling the letter of the law, and neglected the spirit thereof.

Quite different should our life and our justice be. Unfortunately, this is not very often the case with unspiritual Christians. They live outwardly, from habit,

a Christian life. They pray—from habit. They hear Mass—from habit. They receive the Sacraments, but all only from habit.

The soul of a Christian, acting from mere routine, is benighted; he hardly thinks what sources and means of divine grace all these acts of piety embrace for the faithful imitation of Christ and the working out of eternal salvation.

The life of Christ gave *offense* to the Pharisees—they observed it, but did not dream of taking it for their model.

We, as Christians, should do exactly the contrary. The life of Christ, the example of His virtues, should be the *model* and rule of our whole lives, from the cradle to the grave. The righteousness of the Pharisees knew no such guide.

The Pharisees were pleased to *parade* their piety about, and to pray in the streets. Such a prayer was surely no elevation of the heart to God,—no intercourse, no union with God, but a soulless motion of the lips.

Shall our prayer be genuine, and our justice work the sanctification of our lives? then we must follow the admonition of Christ: If you will pray, lock yourself in your closet and pray in secret and with a collected spirit. That we may thus truly and effectively pray, we must approach the Lord personally in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

We must go to Him, and say in the words and with the feelings of the Apostles: "Master, teach us how

to pray." Happy those who act thus; they will find in their life the truth of the words of St. Augustine: "He who prays well, lives well."

Besides prayer, we also need the spirit of *mortification* in order to follow Christ. The Pharisees contented themselves with corporal fasting; but if our justice is to be greater than theirs, then we must not only restrain our appetite for food, but must live, in general, in a spirit of Christian self-abnegation. We must fast with the eyes, the ears; in fact, with all our senses, and must practice with the greatest diligence interior mortification.

The Pharisees were filled with self-love, and puffed up with self-esteem on account of their justice. They knew nothing of love for their neighbor from the love of God. We must practice with deep humility corporal and spiritual works of mercy, from love of God and our neighbor, if our justice is to exceed theirs.

The Pharisees, further, allowed no occasion to pass of laboring in opposition to Christ, and undermining *His work*.

Shall our justice be greater than theirs? then we must support the Church of Christ, and endeavor to disseminate and defend her as much as possible.

How many an opportunity to do this every one of us has, if he only desires earnestly, as a true child of the Church, to interest himself in her welfare and propagation!

Zeal for souls! what a pledge of that justice which will open to us the gates of heaven!

Christian, how is your heart affected by this sermon? Does it concern you? Is your justice greater in every point than that of the Pharisees?

This final question your own conscience must answer!—Amen!

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"I have compassion on the multitude."—Mark 8.

CHRIST sees the hungry multitude, and has pity on them. He feeds them by a miracle. What Christ at that time said, His heart had felt from its first pulsation; for it was the heart of the Redeemer of the world. This compassion was the cause of His coming upon the earth. He did not come to feed a few thousand hungry men, but to instruct all mankind, and to save them from eternal hunger.

He came to feed us with the Manna of His divine Word, yes, with His own flesh and blood, in order to satiate us one day in heaven with the eternal fruition of His divine essence.

To this the words of David refer: "I shall be satiated when Thy glory shall appear;" and Christ Himself frequently makes use of the parable of a marriage feast when He speaks of heaven.

But that we may enter heaven He requires our co-operation, and this co-operation depends on our confidence in His helping hand, and this confidence is, in its turn, awakened within us by meditation on the kindness and compassion of Christ, by which He so

earnestly desires that His life, suffering, and death may not be lost upon us.

Let us consider to-day the compassion Jesus bears for every one of us.

O Mary, mother of mercy, thou who next to Jesus hast most pity on us fallen children of Eve, have compassion on us, that the merits of thy divine Son be not lost upon us!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

How comforting it is to think of the compassionate Heart of Jesus.

"I have compassion on the multitude," said Jesus in regard to the four thousand men who had followed Him to hear His word. But He might have said the same of the entire human race which He came to instruct and to save.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee," says the Lord to every human soul.

The decree of Providence ordaining our redemption was an act of infinite mercy, consequently the human Heart of Jesus was filled with unspeakable compassion for man.

We recognize this fact best when we consider in what manner the feeling of pity is at times awakened and strengthened in our own hearts, and thence con-

clude that the same must hold true of the heart and mercy of Christ, since He was as much man as ourselves.

The first thing we have to consider, however, at present, is the nature of the human heart; for as experience teaches us there is a great difference in hearts. There are men who are naturally kind and compassionate, while others remain cold and insensible to the misery of their fellow-creatures.

To understand how compassionate, how sympathetic God created the heart that beat in the breast of Christ, we need only think why the Son of God became man, and as such entered this world. Holy Writ assures us that all things were ordered wisely and mightily by God; and St. Bernardine of Sienna, as well as other theologians, maintains, that if God allots a certain vocation to any one, then He bestows upon him all the divine graces he needs for this vocation.

Now Christ was to suffer, to shed His blood for each human soul; hence, God the Father bestowed upon Him the most compassionate heart that ever beat upon earth.

We are justified in saying that if all the loving hearts of all the mothers and fathers upon earth were melted into one for one child, this one heart would not contain the love that Jesus bears for each individual human soul, nor the pity that He feels for each one's wretchedness.

The second cause which heightens pity in our hearts, is the magnitude of the misfortune that has befallen

another, and that we, perhaps, understand the consequences better than the sufferer himself. There is a great difference between knowing that some one is hungry, and seeing him die of starvation. There is a great difference between knowing that a house is on fire, and seeing an incendiary at his criminal work. There is a great difference between knowing that some one has wounded himself, and seeing him bleeding to death.

Now, Christ beholds the entire misfortune into which we were plunged by the fall of Adam, and He also sees at the same time the misfortune we have drawn upon ourselves by our own personal sins. He sees that our merits for heaven are lost, and that we are in danger of never entering its gates. He sees, further, the horrors of an eternal condemnation if we depart from the world in this state.

How powerful a motive for His loving heart to have compassion on us! The present and the future lie like an open book before Him, says St. Paul.

The heart is still more moved to pity when the sufferer is some one united to us by the bonds of blood or friendship. This is the case of Christ in regard to us. We are his brothers and sisters, and what He feels for us, no earthly brother, sister, or friend feels, or can ever feel.

The wish to help another is stronger than ever when we have already done a great deal for the person in need.

Every artist takes the utmost care that the work

which he has completed be not damaged or lost; and the more trouble it cost him to produce it, the greater is his solicitude. Now, let us consider what Christ, during His entire life upon earth, did and suffered for us at every step, and particularly during His passion and death upon the cross. How great, how inexpressibly great, is His desire, that His precious and dearly-bought merits be not lost upon one of the children of men! Hence His cry upon the cross: "I thirst!" The fate of the soul upon whom Christ's merits are lost will be far more terrible than if Jesus had not suffered to redeem man.

How great a sorrow must this be for the compassionate heart of Jesus!

Our pity is still more intense when he who suffers will not allow us to help him, although we are abundantly able to do so, and would feel the happier for it. This is exactly the case in regard to the compassion the heart of Jesus feels for us.

He instituted His Church, and left her many and effective means of grace; and besides this He bestows many divine graces upon all in order to save them, yet without doing violence to their will; and when He succeeds His happiness in heaven as Saviour of mankind is increased; for there is more joy in heaven over one soul doing penance than over ninety-nine just. "For this," says David, "will every saint one day give thanks to Thee."

Let us therefore frequently consider this compassion of Christ, that our confidence in His assistance

may awaken and become strong, and that one day may be fulfilled in us also the Word of the Lord: "Because He has hoped in me, I will deliver Him! . . . . I will deliver Him and will glorify Him!" Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks He broke and gave to his disciples"—Mark 8.

JESUS gave thanks. The actions of our Lord are intended by Him as an example for us. By Him alone, and by imitating His virtues, can we hope to be saved. We must tread the path He has traced out for us; we must follow in His footsteps, and daily fashion ourselves more and more to His image and likeness, if we would hope one day to arrive at His kingdom and His happiness. "For," says the Apostle, "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son."

Hence the fact related in this day's Gospel is not without meaning for us. Jesus gave thanks. We also must give thanks, thanks to God. What a noble, comforting and meritorious duty! "Be thankful," says the Apostle to the faithful.

Now, that we may be thankful to God in fact, and in a manner worthy of His divine Majesty, we should bear in mind the circumstances which, even among men, call for gratitude.

With His standard before our minds, and remembering God's countless graces and favors towards us, we shall be forced to exclaim, with the royal Prophet: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has rendered unto me?"

The first thing is thanks.

O Mary, teach us to comprehend the immensity of the gratitude we owe to God; teach us to fulfill this duty upon earth, that we may deserve to intone one day in heaven our "magnificat" of praise and thanksgiving with the raptures of thy grateful heart, before the throne of His infinite mercy!

I speak in the name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

On all sides the voice of Nature proclaims aloud man's duty of gratitude. A little grain of corn is laid in the bosom of the earth, and it yields a hundredfold for man's use and benefit. "The earth that bringeth forth thorns and briars," says the Apostle, "is reprobate . . . whose end is to be burnt."

Even the dumb brutes that surround us teach us the same lesson. Do not the wildest beasts put off their ferocity and become tame under the gentle care of him who feeds them? The dog that, in his eager watchfulness around his master's homestead, bites the intruding wayfarer has, so to say, done his duty; but should he turn upon his master and wound him, he is killed.

But what shall we say of man's opinion of gratitude? Ingratitude is cursed even by the ungrateful. Man, indeed, sometimes impiously and wantonly boasts of his deeds of guilt and shame, but who has ever vaunted of his ingratitude? Rather would one deny an act of kindness bestowed, than, owning it, proclaim his ingratitude.

Now, as Christians, how ardent should be the yearnings of our hearts to thank the Lord for all His gifts! For, if the duty of gratitude is to be commensurate to the dignity and greatness of our benefactor, the value and number of the benefits received; if the magnificence and unworthiness of the recipient should increase the measure of his thanks, what limits can man put to his gratitude towards God, whose exalted Majesty has deigned to shower down the torrents of His love and mercy upon the lowest and most helpless of His reasonable creatures? See what God has done for man, and learn what an imperative and just duty he has to exert his every power to make a suitable return to his generous and almighty Benefactor.

In the first place, then, I say our obligation of gratitude grows stricter in proportion to the rank of him who bestows the kindness and the lowliness of him who receives it.

Now, who is it that heaps His favors and mercies upon us? Who, but the God of infinite majesty and glory, the Creator and Preserver of the world; Who, though He wants us not, deigns, nevertheless, to accept our services. Yet what are we, even the worthiest amongst us? Creatures in the lowest scale of rational beings, called from nothingness into life and existence by a mere act of God's all-powerful will. In body, formed out of the clay of the earth, destined to become dust and ashes, and a banquet for worms; by descent, members of a fallen race—children of wrath

robbed, by the fall of our first parents, of sanctifying grace; offspring of sin, from our very conception, and enemies of God! Add to this the deformity of our personal sins and ill-doings, many, perhaps, and grievous! Such is man!

Now, that God in his mercy should, notwithstanding all this, have made us children of His house, the Church, cleansed us in the sacred laver of baptism from the defilements of sin, and poured out upon us an unceasing stream of spiritual and temporal blessings,—that God, I say, should have dealt thus mercifully towards us, is surely a strong motive for gratitude on our part.

I said before, that the duty of gratitude increases with the *number* of the benefits received. Well, then, let us consider these benefits in the order in which they have been lavished upon us by God, from the first moment of existence, both as to body and soul.

See the benefits which accrue to man merely from those senses with which God has endowed and beautified his earthly frame. In order the more feelingly to understand and appreciate their value, consider what you would be without them!

You now see, hear, speak, feel, move and walk. If, at this moment, whilst I am addressing you, God were to destroy the powers of your senses, what would be your misfortune! Your eyes now see, and gaze exultingly upon the beauties of God's works—upon the sun, moon and stars, streams and rivers, valleys and mountain-tops; but were God suddenly to spread the

vail of blindness over those eyes, plunged in sad and melancholy darkness, how you would yearn after light! At present, you hear my words; but were God suddenly to take away your power of hearing, what anxiety would befall you! And should God suddenly deprive you of your speech, how would it be with you, dumb and unable to articulate an intelligible word, even like unto the beasts of the field? Or should He relax the nerves and muscles of your body, and leave you motionless and paralyzed upon a weary bed, how sad would be your plight! and how would you be a prey to melancholy, at seeing yourself, but a short time before active and vigorous, now unable to move hand or foot, and no better than a living corpse!

Do you now understand the use and benefit of those senses which God has so kindly and so wisely given to your body? Have you ever thought of all this? Have you ever thanked that almighty Architect who has thus wonderfully and wisely framed and embellished your earthly tabernacle? Perhaps never!

But if our gratitude should be great from the consideration of the marvels of our bodily senses, what should it be when we consider the powers of our soul, the gifts of reason, memory and free-will? To what a sad condition would you be reduced, were you suddenly, here in this church, to lose your memory and your reason, be no longer conscious of who you are, where you are, and, consequently, all at once brought down to the level of unconscious brutes! Then, as man—as a human being—for how many benefits are

you indebted to God! You are a being formed of a body and a soul; and, as to your soul, created to the image and likeness of God Himself.

Consider, moreover, what graces you have received in the order of nature. Every breath you draw, every pulsation of your heart, every drop of water, every mouthful of bread, the very garments with which you are clad, all are the gifts of God! Considering all this, I ask you, with the Apostle: Man, "what hast thou that thou hast not received?"

But more urgent far will be our obligation to be grateful, if we reflect upon God's gifts in the order of grace. We were lost, irreparably lost, and banished from heaven; its gates were barred and bolted against us. But to repair our misfortune, the Son of God, clothed in our nature, came into this world, and won back the birthright we had forfeited; and, by His redeeming mercy and death, purchased for poor, forlorn mortals, the rich inheritance of which Adam had despoiled us. If we have been made the children of His Church, if we have been made the brothers of Jesus Christ, co-heirs to His kingdom, and partakers of His graces as our Redeemer, what share could we have had in all this without His bountiful mercy and generosity?

The Gentiles, who lived during those long and bleak four thousand years ere the Redeemer came to perform His work,—nay, millions who yet live and have lived since His coming, have not enjoyed these blessings.

Again, how many in error, wandering shepherdless

outside the fold of Christ's Church, and sitting in the shadow of irreligion, or of a faith that is not the faith of salvation and of God, how many, I say, are deprived of the graces and favors God has so bountifully conferred upon us!

Furthermore, let each one in particular weigh the many graces God has given him, through the Christian education he has received as a child of the Church; through the light-giving whisperings of God's Holy Spirit; through the counsel and advice of father, mother, and teacher, and, above all, through the participation of Christ's body and blood in the eucharistic banquet which he has been so often allowed to approach, despite the many sins of his former life!

Finally, reflect that Christ has gone to prepare an abode of rest and happiness for us—not in some remote corner of the earth, but in the mansion of the God-head in heaven. Considering and pondering all these favors and blessings in our heart, is it possible not to cry out, with David: "What shall I render to the Lord?" Give yourself to Him, and thank Him to your latest breath. These are the acknowledgments He demands of you! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets."—Mark 8.

NOT only did Christ feed with the seven loaves of bread and the few fishes a multitude of people, but after they had eaten, more food remained than had been on hand before the distribution. They filled seven baskets with what was left.

In all the events narrated by the Gospel, there is contained, according to the holy fathers, a moral and a spiritual lesson. The circumstance, that seven baskets were filled with remnants, has, therefore, a moral application.

I shall, to-day, speak of the increase which seven virtues revive in us, if we place ourselves with confidence in the arms of divine Providence, and accustom ourselves to put our hope in God, and to receive gratefully from His hands whatever He bestows upon us, for body and soul, for time and for eternity.

These seven baskets of virtues are, namely, the practice of the theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity; of those moral virtues that have a direct influence upon the sanctification of our lives as children of God, which are: humility, patience, fortitude, and zeal in the fulfillment of corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

I shall, to-day, consider with you these seven baskets

of virtue, which are filled by our trust in Divine Providence.

O Mary, mother, who, with all the love of thy motherly heart, takest care of us, bless us, and strengthen our trust in the providence of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first virtue which is exercised and strengthened by our trust in the Lord's providence is the virtue of holy *faith*. He that trusts in God's providence, makes by this trust an act of faith, since he recognizes God as the almighty, infinite, kind, and faithful God, who has assured us so solemnly, and especially, through Christ, that He would take care of us like a Father. Consider the lilies of the field, and the grass of the earth; the Father takes care of them, how much more of you!—No sparrow falls to the ground without His will; how much more will He take care of you!—Not a hair will fall from your head without His will.

Faith shows itself strongest where there is but little hope of human help, and hence the virtue of Christian *hope* is strengthened by our trust in God's providence.

Whoever trusts in God, hopes, and this hope is the more glorious and victorious, as there is less prospect that men will or can stretch out their hand to help us.

This hope grows and becomes strong when we learn, by experience, how unexpectedly and mightily God comes to our help in need and sorrow.

This trust, this knowledge, nourishes and strengthens in us the virtue of *love* for God, by the gratitude we feel when the Almighty has heard our supplication, our prayer, and sent more than we asked for and expected. It is mostly gratitude for received benefits that keeps bright the fire of love in our hearts.

These exercises of the three theological virtues and their increase in our heart, are the first three baskets of virtue which trust in the providence of God fills.

This trust in God's providence has, in addition, the most beneficial influence upon the moral disposition of our hearts, through the exercise of those virtues that most aid us in the sanctification of our lives, namely: humility, patience, fortitude, and zeal in the practice of corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

I say, first: humility. Pride is self-confident, and feels not its own weakness. A proud man trusts himself, his own talents, skill, intelligence, or he has confidence in his ability to procure the assistance of others; whereas a Christian, who has put his trust in God, practices humility, by not depending on his own power, but on the wise guidance of God.

A Christian, habituated to trust in God's providence, exercises himself also in holy *patience*. He who depends solely upon himself or upon others, is easily roused to impatience when he encounters an obstacle, or is deceived; and hence the want of firmness, of stability, in all his undertakings.

Quite different is he who trusts in God; he bears

with patience all that is antagonistic to him, all that obstructs his endeavors, and perseveres until the end. He adores the Lord's decrees, knowing full well that God has, perhaps, not immediately answered his prayers, in order that patience might increase his merits, and to bestow still greater graces upon him in recompense for his perseverance, his obedience to Divine dispensations.

He looks upon Abraham, the Father of the faithful, of whom Holy Writ says: "He hoped against hope," which is exactly that disposition which bears witness to the *fortitude* of our faith, hope, and charity.

Our trust in the providence of God is especially important, because it enables us to do all that the love of God, the desire to glorify Him, demands, and because it also urges us to be kind to our neighbor, and to take care of his body and soul, and in this manner it arouses and strengthens our *zeal* in the spreading of the kingdom of God upon earth.

Proofs of this we can find in the lives of the saints. How many and how great their undertakings, especially for the dissemination of faith, and in the foundation of religious orders! Had they trusted in themselves, or in men alone, they would never have been inspired with the lofty thoughts of the children of God, as Holy Writ calls them; they would not have executed their plans so joyfully, and would not have overcome so courageously and successfully all the obstacles that barred their path.

Their trust was in God. They felt and confessed

it before God and man, and this disposition of their heart was often visible in their outward manner.

Thus we read, for example, of St. Francis Xavier, that if people who did not know him were asked how he looked, by what they could recognize him, they answered: "If you meet a priest who often raises his eyes to heaven you may know that it is Francis Xavier."

This upward look of the saint tells in whom he trusted, from whence he expected help and blessing in order to execute successfully the grand work for which God sent him to Asia.

Similar facts are related to us of other saints. Their trust was: "The Lord!"

Behold here the seven baskets of virtue, which trust in God's providence fills to overflowing!

This disposition of the heart is especially important in carrying to a successful issue the work of salvation.

Whoever during life is accustomed to repose trustingly in the arms of divine Providence, will do the same when he comes to die, and he can then, full of confidence, say with St. Francis Xavier: "In Thee, O God, have I trusted; I shall not be confounded!"—Amen!

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"By their fruits you shall know them."—Matt. 7.

THE world is full of deception, and this deception is the more dangerous, because no one is secure from it.

The Apostle assures us that Satan at times changes himself into an angel of light in order to corrupt souls under the appearance of good. Christ Himself speaks in to-day's Gospel of false prophets, who inwardly are wolves, but who have clothed themselves in sheep's skins.

There is one kind of deception especially which is often practised by those having the happiness of being children of the Catholic Church, namely: the belief that their salvation is secured because they are children of that holy Church, and also because they really perform many of the duties imposed by Christianity. This apparently Catholic life is the sheep-skin with which they clothe themselves, while they secretly indulge in the most abominable vices, and are like rapacious wolves in the corruption of others.

The enormity of the deception of a person who is satisfied with living only nominally a Catholic life, becomes clear to us from the parable of the good and

bad tree. A good tree brings forth good fruit, an evil tree brings forth evil fruit; and by the fruits will we recognize whether a man walks really upon the path of salvation or not.

Let us earnestly consider to-day this parable of Christ, for what would it avail us to be Catholics if we nevertheless went to eternal perdition?

O Mary, thou tree of life, who hast borne for the blessing of all nations Jesus, the fruit of thy womb and of thy virtuous life, pray for us that His grace may bear fruit within us.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"*A good tree*," says Jesus, "*brings forth good fruit.*" Certainly, but it does not follow from this that every bough or seed of a good tree must bring forth fruit. That this may happen several conditions must be fulfilled which have all a spiritual signification. A short reflection on these conditions will be not a little beneficial to our soul, to the end that the fruit-tree of our life may not wither, or stand barren, and without fruit.

That a tree may bring forth fruit, it is necessary, first, that the roots have good soil, such as can give them nourishment and strength.

The ground for the tree of a good life is faith—instruction in religion, reflections on the truths of reve-

lation, according to St. Paul, who says: "The just man lives by faith."

What an important admonition, especially for parents! How often is it not the case that they themselves are only nominal Christians, imperfectly instructed in their faith, and hence but little concerned about the instruction of their children! This is particularly so here in America. What is the consequence? The sapling of life withers before it has grown up.

The sand and rubbish of temporal cares is the earth in which such people place the shoot of their tree of life. It draws no sap from the earth, and soon dies.

Secondly, that a fruit-tree may grow, it must be watered, and the dews of heaven must refresh it.

The water, the dew, is an emblem of prayer.

How much this watering process is neglected in the education of the young! The parents frequently pray neither at morning nor at night, and thus accustom their children to live without having recourse to God. Hence no growth, no progress in virtue. Yes, even on Sundays and festivals of obligation, many parents neglect to hear Mass; and their children, following their example, do not go to Church either. Perhaps the parents even work on holydays, and in this the children also soon imitate their elders.

There is, above all, among Christians a neglect of spiritual reading, and of the frequentation of the Sacraments. They have recourse to the Sacraments only when the weeds and brambles of sin have outgrown

the sapling of virtue. What is worse, even when at last they approach these fountains of graces, they commit sacrileges, and the young tree is poisoned and destroyed to the very roots.

Thirdly, if a sapling is to grow up and bear fruit, its trunk must be carefully watched, that it may not fork and throw out saplings, but grow up straight towards heaven; otherwise it becomes a bush, and perhaps instead of fruit bears thorns.

What does this signify? It signifies that our will, our character, should be one and undivided, that we be resolved not to live for that which is earthly, but for that which is eternal—for God, for heaven; to raise eye and heart continually upward, as the priest daily tells the children of the Church from the altar. This aim is the trunk of the tree of life.

But that this aim may be practical the trunk must spread out branches; we must namely make resolutions to live according to our station in life. Our life must be well regulated, our duties must stand clearly defined before our inner eye, and we must be determined to fulfill them from love to God.

This desire makes the tree blossom, and brings out the buds of good resolutions. But that these blossoms may not wither and die, that they may develop into fruit, the tree needs light, as also that inner flow of the sap which the root diffuses through the trunk into the branches.

The light exemplifies our good intentions, our continual remembrance of the presence of God, which,

like the sun, sends light and warmth through our interior life.

The inner sap exemplifies sanctifying grace, which has to dwell within us if the virtues of life shall not be mere semblances, but be real solid fruit brought to maturity and ripeness.

If this is the case fruit will not be wanting, especially if the disposition of the heart is such that it secures the ripening, and does not allow the fruit to fall and be lost before its time. This is the work of holy *patience*.

How vigorously, how encouragingly this virtue acts upon the growth, the ripening of the fruit!

A fruit-tree does not stand in a conservatory, but in the open field, and is exposed to all the inclemency of the weather—to rains and chilly winds, and the fiery rays of the midsummer sun. The branches are tossed by the storm, and the trunk sways under its violence. It is change of temperature and variations in the weather that develop the bud and mature the fruit.

"Heaven suffers violence." This admonition of Christ should be constantly before our eyes if we desire to grow up like a good fruit-tree, and not only bear some, but abundant fruit in accordance with the measure of divine grace which God has given us.

This is the parable that Christ proposed to us. May we carefully consider it, and make use of the lessons it points out to us, in order that our life may become fruitful, and bear a rich crop for eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the heavenly gardener! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire."—Matt. 7.

HOW earnest and solemn is the Lord's menace in to-day's Gospel: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire!" And mark well, not only every tree that bringeth forth bad fruit is threatened with this dreadful punishment, but also such trees as do not bring forth good fruit.

For, if we wish to be numbered amongst the children of God, we must, as our Lord Himself declares in to-day's Gospel, fulfill the will of our heavenly Father, according to the spirit of our vocation and in conformity with the duties of our state of life. The neglect of this obligation is an evil in itself, and brings down upon us the sentence of condemnation.

Unless we strive with all earnestness to advance in the way to perfection, we shall, even in this life, be deprived of many consolations, without which we easily fall a prey to despondency and despair.

Thus, through a neglect of our spiritual welfare, we shall never know the joy and happiness which flow from a peaceful conscience; nor shall we ever experience the complete security and cheerful hope with which the fervent, earnest Christian may look forward to the day of retribution.

But certainly the most awful punishment with which

the negligent Christian is threatened in to-day's Gospel, is his eternal banishment to the flames of hell! For, "Every tree," says the Lord, "that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire."

O Mary, our refuge and hope, obtain for us, thy children, the grace, that we may live in such a manner as one day to be found worthy of being united to thee for all eternity in heaven!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The first thing with which the tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is threatened, signifies the chief punishment of the damned,—"it shall be cut down."

If we have fulfilled the will of God during our earthly life,—if we have brought forth good fruit for eternity,—we shall then be transplanted as good trees from the paradise of the Church into that of heaven. But should we have been careless in the service of the Almighty, should we have slighted His commandments and neglected our duties towards His holy Church, we should then be cut down like a tree that has brought forth bad and worthless fruit, and which is good for nothing but the fire!

What do we mean by the words "cut down"? It will be easy to understand the signification of this expression, if we but consider the joys of heaven as they are revealed to us by the light of faith.

Holy Writ calls heaven a *paradise; i. e.*, a world of wonders, created by God for the recompense of His faithful servants. And now, though no man can divine the beauty and splendor and grandeur of the paradise of God, still it does not surpass a mortal's comprehension to understand that a God, who is infinite beauty, infinite splendor, infinite might and glory, that such a God, I say, should be able, and is able, to call into being creations grander and nobler than the greatest beauties of the earth.

What a beautiful fairy world can the imagination of man conjure up, by re-combining and re-arranging the elements of the visible world about us! What grand and wondrous things, then, must not God, the almighty Creator, be able to design and execute!

And now, dear Christians, if you fulfill the holy will of God as it has been taught you by your pastors; that is, if, as good trees in the paradise of the Church, you bring forth good works for eternity, you will then soon be admitted into the heavenly paradise; where, rejoicing with great joy, you will exclaim: "I see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living;" heaven is mine,—all is mine! If, on the contrary, you have not performed good works, or have done evil deeds, you will hear the voice of the Judge, saying: "Cut down the tree, and throw it into the fire." Far from tasting the indescribable joys of heaven, you will, O horror! be condemned to the everlasting torments of hell!

Holy Writ calls heaven the *kingdom of joy*. Indeed, nothing but joy, infinite joy, reigns in heaven!

"I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people: and God Himself with them shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor weeping, nor sorrow."

Yes, dear Christians, nothing but everlasting joy is the inheritance of the blessed in the kingdom of God. There is not a moment of care, not a moment of sadness or sorrow.

Such will be your reward, if, during your life here below, you will treasure up good works for the life to come. But if you have not brought forth good fruit, you will, like a dead tree, be cut down, and never, never taste of those pure joys, of which St. Paul tells us: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those who love Him." Never, unless you be a tree productive of good fruit in the paradise of the Church of God, will you, even for one single moment, through all the ages of eternity, enjoy this heavenly bliss, this all-surpassing beauty!

What a loss! The tree is cut down and cast away. What a dreadful evil!

Holy Writ calls heaven the *place of reward* for the

good works which we have performed, and the sufferings which we have patiently borne for the love of God. Nay, not even a glass of water given to the least of our neighbors for the love of Jesus, shall remain without its reward. And what will be this reward? Ah, dear Christians, its beauty and splendor will surpass all imaginable magnificence in this world; not the richest crowns, not the grandest princely pomp, will bear comparison to the things which God has prepared for the reward of those who show themselves His faithful and devoted children!

Happy you, God-loving soul, who, as a good tree, have brought forth good fruit by a faithful observance of the Divine law, and by the patient endurance of your daily trials! Indeed, the day will come, when you will exclaim in astonishment: Too great, O Lord, too great is Thy bounty towards me; never have I deserved, O Lord, the good things Thou hast given to me!

But woe to you, O sinner, who have not brought forth good fruit! You will be cut down, and will for evermore lament your miserable lot in the flames of hell! The menace of the Lord will be fulfilled in you: "He shall die in his sin, and his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered." What a loss! what a terrible punishment!

Holy Writ calls heaven the *communion with angels and saints in all their bliss.* Who can imagine what a flood of joy and happiness awaits the soul of the just in such an assembly!

Happy you, who, during life, have endeavored to imitate the saints—your departed brethren, and have, as good trees, brought forth good fruit in abundance! The bliss of angels and archangels will soon be your own.

But if you have not performed good works, or even have done evil deeds, then will your Judge pronounce the terrible sentence of condemnation against you: "Cut down the tree." And instead of enjoying the community of angels and saints, you will be most unmercifully tormented by the evil spirits and by the damned, especially by those souls to whom you have given scandal by your dissolute manner of life.

Instead of partaking of the beatitude of Christ and His blessed mother, the Lord will say to you: "Depart from Me, you cursed!"

But allow me once more to ask you: What is heaven? Holy Writ again answers for you, saying: "It is God!" "I Myself," says the Lord, "shall be thine inheritance."

And what is God? God is infinite beauty, infinite bliss, infinite love. The possession of a God who is infinite beauty itself,—did this possession last but for a single moment,—would be, as St. Augustine says, an overwhelming recompense for a life-long martyrdom.

If our life has been full of good works, we will then be united with God, and will, through this union, be made partakers of His beatitude.

If, however, our life has not been fruitful of good

works, and even has been sullied with many a sinful deed and thought, then the terrible sentence, "Cut down the tree," will be unmercifully hurled against us. Our loss, in this case, will be God and His infinite glory. And this loss will be irreparable; it will last for all eternity! What a terrible loss!

Let us then, dear Christians, according to the counsel of St. Peter, secure our salvation by leading a truly edifying life, a life full of good and holy actions!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire."—Matt. 7.

THE cutting down of the tree that does not bear good fruit reminds us of the first part of the punishment in hell, namely, the loss of eternal beatitude, of eternal delight, of eternal union with God in His glory, and in the enjoyment of all created bliss.

The last words of the menace of Christ: "and shall be cast into the fire," recalls to our mind the second part of the punishment in hell, namely, the torment which the sinner is forced to endure there, if he has led a life barren of good deeds, if he has not brought forth good fruit, but, on the contrary, evil fruit.

Christ, in to-day's Gospel, speaks only of fire; but, in several passages of Holy Writ, mention is made of other torments.

Meditation on the pains of hell strengthens the soul in her resolution, rather to forego every temporary pleasure, and to bear every transient affliction, than to expose herself to the danger of enduring the eternal sufferings of the damned.

We shall to-day consider, in order, these torments of hell.

O Mary, mother, we beg thee, by thy maternal heart, not to permit even a single one of thy children here present to be subjected to the torments of the damned!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cast into the fire." Our divine Saviour here mentions the punishment by fire as the greatest and most painful torment that the damned suffer; but it is not the only one. Christ speaks also of other torments; and He has revealed to us, through His Prophets and Apostles, that in hell the sinner shall have to endure hunger, eternal hunger; thirst, eternal thirst; the most profound darkness, the worm that never dies, gnashing of teeth and howlings of despair, fire, eternal fire!

Holy Writ speaks first of the *hunger* of the condemned: "They shall suffer hunger like dogs." What a dreadful torment is hunger, even when endured but a few days!

Josephus Flavius, in his description of the siege of Jerusalem, says that the pangs of hunger were so dire as to cause mothers to eat their own children!

In hell this hunger reigns forever! What distress that is, sinner, you will experience in hell!

There, too, unrelenting *thirst* is experienced forever! The torment of thirst is greater than that of hunger, as all those inform us who have traveled in deserts. But what is their thirst compared to that of the rich man in hell, who, as Christ tells us, thus called to Abraham: "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip

of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in these flames."

Christ further assures us that hell is the place where the worm never dies, and by this worm He signifies the remorse of conscience: It is your own fault; it was not the will of God; it was so easy to save your soul; God bestowed so many divine graces upon you; you neglected them, set no store by them.

Bitter as these complaints may be, more bitter still will be the anguish of those who had during life so many opportunities of saving their souls; and such is the case with all the children of the Church.

Woe to me, cries the unfortunate Catholic who has lost his soul! I had so many graces; I was a Catholic; God gave me good parents, teachers, confessors and priests; and I am damned! I had so many means of securing my salvation: Catholic instruction from my youth, sermons, Holy Mass, confession, communion; and I am damned!

But these are not all the torments which the sinner suffers in hell. Let us try to conceive all the pain of the manifold maladies to which flesh is heir, all the tortures the martyrs endured, the very thought of which causes us to shudder, and yet all these are as naught, compared with the sufferings of the damned in hell; for there, gnashing of teeth, howling, despair, fire, prevail!

That such is really the punishment of the damned, no one can doubt who considers what the Old and

New Testament, the Apostles, the Holy Fathers, and Christ Himself have said concerning it.

Isaias and all the Prophets expressly state this punishment of *fire*. They call hell, the pit of death,—the soil of curses,—the pool of brimstone,—the *fire*. Isaias says, emphatically: "Which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" "He will," says St. John the Baptist, "burn the chaff with unquenchable fire." St. Peter and St. Thaddaeus exclaim: They will suffer the punishment of fire, which God has prepared for the devil and his followers. "And the smoke of the pit arose," says St. John, "as the smoke of a great furnace;" and Christ Himself assures us that those to whom He says depart, "shall go into eternal fire!"

The Holy Fathers, whose commentaries on Holy Writ we have to follow according to the laws of the Church, give their testimony with the same precision.

What can be more explicit than what the Holy Fathers say of the torments of Hell? St. Cyprian writes thus: "There are various pains in hell, where, through the utmost darkness, the flames of eternal fire break forth." Before him St. Justin wrote: "They will suffer eternal fire for their crimes."

Ignatius, a disciple of the Apostles, tells us: "Those to whom He says, Depart from me into eternal fire, are condemned to remain forever in the same."

St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, teaches: "The sinner re-

ceives an immortal body in order that, though burning for evermore, he may yet never be consumed."

"There even spirits are tormented by material fire," writes St. Augustine.

What torture! How is it possible that any one, who, as a child of the Church possesses the grace of faith, should not be willing to endure any thing in this world, rather than expose himself to the danger of suffering such torments for all eternity!

The only means of guarding ourselves against so dreadful a future, is to make use of the divine graces and talents God has bestowed upon us, to avoid all sin, to overcome all temptations; and thus by bringing forth fruits of life, by fulfilling the most holy will of God, follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

In addition to this our reason alone should tell us that, if God created rational—and, hence, immortal—beings; if He endowed them with freedom to fulfill or transgress His laws, He was also obliged to support these laws with endless punishment, if these immortal beings dared to violate them. I say endless punishment, because, for an immortal being, no sanction of a law is adequate unless it be eternal; for the contemptuous sinner might brave God, and choose to undergo any temporary punishment rather than be deprived of the present satisfaction of his passions. In that case the punishment would, in time, pass, and all would be over.

But if the punishment is eternal—without end—

even the devil must tremble at it, and the eternal laws of God have a sufficient sanction; otherwise, not.

Deign then, O Lord, to protect us from the transgression of Thy law, and from the everlasting evil of hell! Amen!

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

(FOR GERMANY, BUT ALSO SUITABLE FOR AMERICA.)

"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."—Luke 16.

IN reading to-day's Gospel our first impression is that we can not learn any thing from the unjust steward to animate us to follow the virtuous life of the saints, and yet this is an error.

On the contrary, his conduct teaches us a great deal, if we consider what Christ says in comparing it with the life of those, who, although not guilty of such injustice, do not lead a life of true zeal, or work with any care to increase their merits and secure their salvation.

Christ, of course, does not praise the steward for his injustice, but for his cleverness, and in this regard the children of God can learn a great deal from the children of the world.

I speak of the behavior and cleverness of the children of the world in their sphere, and of the want of this cleverness in the children of God in matters of eternal import.

It shall be my aim to make this clear to you to-day.

O Mary, thou wisest of all virgins, pray for us that we may receive that wisdom which characterized thy life upon earth!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

To understand how much wiser the children of the world are in their way, than the children of God in theirs, we need only think in what the character of wisdom consists, and on the manner in which it makes itself known.

Wisdom consists in having the end which one is determined to reach clearly before one's eyes, and in choosing consequently, with the greatest precaution and prudence, the most serviceable means, and making the most advantageous use of them for this end.

Let us apply this definition to the behavior of the children of the world, and we shall soon see how wise they are in their way, and how much reason the children of God have to feel ashamed before them.

The aim of the children of the world is earthly, it is temporal well-being. Riches, honors, and pleasure are what they endeavor to procure and to retain as long as possible. These are the aspirations of a worldling from his youth; to the acquirement of these his thoughts are all directed.

What do such children hear more frequently from their parents than: "Endeavor with all your might to become happy in this world?" Thus father and mother admonish and teach by their example. Of the care

that should be bestowed upon the salvation of the soul, the child does not, perhaps during the entire year, hear one word.

The same thought guides the worldling in choosing his vocation: "What shall I become to be most successful upon earth?" This makes up for him the greatest attainable good, and to gain it he is ready to leave friends and relatives. He procures for himself opportunities and means for learning a profession, an art, a science, even if parents and guardians give him no assistance or support.

He leaves his country, crosses the ocean, commences his business under a thousand privations, makes himself known, looks for friends to help him, procures for himself always more and better means, gains daily in skill to use these means more profitably, and does not allow himself to be disturbed in his labor by the talk of people who do not know his circumstances.

He further watches untiringly over his affairs, carefully compares his income and expenses, knows how to profit by each new gain, tries to profit by the experiences of those who have been in a similar business, conducted it successfully, and have become rich.

Thus proceeds a child of the world, and reaches the aim of his enterprises by a zeal which, compared to the care bestowed by the children of God upon their salvation, is most humiliating to them. The blessed Thomas à Kempis said already many hundreds of years ago: "If men would only do for the service of

God the tenth part of what they do for the world, they would all become great saints."

Had he lived in our time, and seen the striving of men after riches, he could have said: "If men would only do for the service of God the hundredth part of what they do for the world, they would all become great saints.

Let us now apply this to our subject, and let us consider the behavior of those who call themselves children of God, because they are children of the Church.

The aim at which we, as children of God, have to strive is to use the time upon earth to gain heaven, to have the way leading to it clear before our eyes, and to benefit according to our strength by the means we receive to achieve this end. A child of God will, of course, think of all this, but a nominal Christian does not consider it near so earnestly as a child of the world regards the end for which he toils.

A nominal Christian only too often loses sight of his aim, and does not pursue it as perseveringly as a child of the world pursues money, honor, enjoyment, and a long life.

Were this reproach well founded, how should we live? First, on awakening in the morning, how carefully should every one form the good intention: All for God! renewing this act often during the day, as it contains the condition necessary to make all our works meritorious for heaven!

If Christians were wise in the manner of children of the world, how carefully would they strive to live

in the grace of God, as otherwise all good works do not possess merits for the life to come! How ceaselessly would they endeavor to fulfill the most holy will of God in all their undertakings, as God recompenses us for all we do according to His will!

How anxious would they be to choose the right vocation, to live where God wills it, and to make practical use of the divine graces through which we are every thing, and without which we are unable to perform a meritorious action!

These graces are principally prayer, attendance at Holy Mass, reading of pious books, hearing of sermons, and receiving the Holy Sacraments.

How anxious is a worldling to use all the means at his disposal to further his business, to increase his income, to watch his expenses, and to cover every loss as quickly and as effectually as possible. An anxious child of the world knows every evening what he has lost or gained, whether business was good or bad during the day.

If the children of God watched in this manner over their one necessary occupation by the particular examination of conscience, how rich they would grow in merits, and daily stride forward on the path to heaven!

In addition to this, how we would grow in merits and virtue if, in imitation of the children of the world, we were careful to use every opportunity of doing good, of glorifying God, of spreading His kingdom, of instructing unbelievers and followers of false creeds, of converting sinners, and edifying the good!

Our efforts ought to be the more earnest and our success ought to be made the surer, as these labors bear upon a life that knows no ending, while all the successes of the children of the world end with their life on earth. And yet the zeal of worldlings immeasurably surpasses that of the children of God. Yes, yes, they are *wiser* in their generation!

Let us profit by this admonition, and endeavor to surpass them in wisdom, and our life will be holy! Amen!

FIRST SERMON.

(FOR AMERICA.)

"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."—Luke 16.

TO those who read or hear to-day's Gospel, without reflection, it may not appear clear why Christ, pointing to the unjust steward, gives him as an example for imitation to his disciples. I say those who read or hear without reflection; for, to those who meditate, it soon becomes evident how we, as children of God on our way to heaven, can draw profit for our salvation from the conduct of the unjust steward.

Christ Himself gives us the reason in the most explicit manner when He says: "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Yes, so they are, and how much might we learn of them in order to advance upon the path of Christian perfection with the zeal of the saints! This we will comprehend better if we consider in what the wisdom of this life consists, and what are its characteristics, and then, taking the other side, compare:

How wisely the children of the world proceed in regard to gaining their wishes, and how far behind them nominal Christians are in regard to the great business of their salvation.

O Mary, thou the wisest of virgins, as the Church calls thee, pray for us, that we may receive the grace to follow thy example, that, as wise children of God, we may gain eternal recompense!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

We call him wise who, during his life, acts in accordance with those principles which distinguish wisdom. Wisdom demands that in regard to an important end we choose the most efficacious means, and make use of them in the most profitable manner, in order to gain, on the one hand, as much as possible, and to guard, on the other hand, against all loss, and make the gain secure.

Further, that a loss incurred be repaired as soon as possible, and, perhaps, even turned to advantage.

Let us consider, to-day, the first characteristic of true wisdom, and let us apply it to our subject.

I said before that wisdom shows itself in the means that a person chooses to arrive at a certain end, and in the manner in which he makes use of these means, in his earnestness, determination and perseverance.

Oh, how wise in this respect are the children of the world! We need only look at the Americans, and all those who have come from far-off countries here, as the saying is, to make their living.

First, every one who, of his own accord, takes the resolution of going to America, is very cautious in forming that resolve; he endeavors to procure means

to execute his plan; he fixes on the State where he will settle, and how he can get there; he examines what kind of people he wants to live with, what occupation he will pursue, and where he can do so with most profit.

How careful every one is to get a safe ship, to have agreeable fellow-travelers, to be provided with letters of introduction and all that might be useful to him; yes, he even sometimes goes so far as to take tools and household articles with him. Thus he goes on board, and all his thoughts, all his actions, are contained in the one resolution: I am going to America, and shall endeavor to live there as happily and as long as I can.

As soon as he arrives here he endeavors to put his plans into execution. Hundreds and hundreds of obstacles lie across his path,—he overcomes them all.

Thomas à Kempis says of the people of his time, that if they would do for heaven but the tenth part of what they did for the world, they would all become great saints. Had he seen America, and how the people here work and strive to gain money, what would he then have said? If man but worked the hundredth part as earnestly, as perseveringly for heaven as they do for the world, they would all become great saints.

If he who comes here is a farmer, he frequently goes into the most remote woods, and what does he not suffer until he succeeds in erecting his shanty, then

his log-house, then in laying out his farm, and, lastly, in building his house of brick, with stables and barns?

But with this his labors are not yet finished. Perhaps, if he has many children, he sells his property and settles in a still more inland State, buys five times as much land, and commences anew his hard labor, until, sooner than he supposed, he has to leave it all and is laid in the ground!

He knows how short human life is, yet he toils on. Even should he not be called away before he has succeeded, yet how soon the cold hand of death is laid upon his heart and snaps its firmest strings! Good reason has he, then, to say with King Agag: "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?"

The very same will happen if he intends making his fortune in a city, as an artisan, merchant, politician, or in a profession.

What does he do in that case? He commences by trying to become acquainted and make friends! If, having a business, he fails, he begins anew; and how many there are who, when in the last hour they look back upon their life, must confess that they have never, by their own fault, lost an opportunity of earning even a single cent; that they have lived and worked for this world, as if there were no eternity to look forward to!

Now, let us compare with this the conduct of those who call themselves children of holy Church, and who pretend to be true Christians. Their aim in life is: To serve God and work out their salvation.

Indeed, the care of our salvation, of approaching eternity, should be our constant thought day and night. All else should be subordinate to it; business, work, pleasure, gain and loss,—all should aid us in serving God and working out our salvation.

Yes, if every Christian, every child of the Catholic Church, would make use of the means offered him to lead such a life, with the determination, the perseverance, which children of the world show in earthly affairs, his salvation would be assured.

There are times when children of the world are out of work, or when other circumstances oppress them, and place obstacles in their path; while for a zealous Christian, for a child of God, all outward hinderances, temporal misery, sickness and sorrow, when borne patiently, secure and increase the joys of eternal life.

If every child of God would endeavor to go onward with the zeal displayed by children of the world in temporal affairs; if they made use of the means placed at their disposal, as prayer, religious books, intercourse with other servants of God, and, especially, the presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, with what giant steps would they advance upon the path of salvation, in order to ascend daily higher and higher to that throne of glory which God has prepared for those who serve Him, and who thus increase their heavenly treasures!

But, unhappily, the greater part of the children of God do not possess this wisdom, hence the large number of lukewarm, miserable and foolish Christians.

God grant that you, feeling yourself portrayed in each one of these points, may not have to beat your breast, and confess before the Almighty: That concerns me!

At any rate, say, at least at the end of this sermon: Lord, with Thy grace my life must and shall be changed!— Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"The children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."—Luke 16.

TO-DAY'S Gospel speaks of the benefit we can draw from the example of the children of the world, namely, to learn of them to be wise, not in matters pertaining to the world, to the body, to the intellect; but in all that concerns our salvation and eternal happiness hereafter.

Wisdom demands that we strive to obtain, with well-chosen means, the aim we have in view. The wisdom of the children of the world is seen in the perseverance and carefulness with which they endeavor to attain their purpose: temporal happiness, earthly riches, a momentary applause, sensual pleasure, a long life.

How great a success, how great a gain, would not follow, if every child of God, every believing Christian, would proceed in the same manner upon the path of salvation; would use the same determination, perseverance and wisdom to augment his merits, and to follow this path till the end of his earthly career!

Not less important, and at the same time humiliating is it for us, when we regard another principal and noticeable fact proving the wisdom and prudence of the children of the world. I refer to the care, the courage, the energy, the zeal, the perseverance which

they manifest when there is question of guarding their wealth, their honor, their health, their comfortable life against danger, or of preventing misfortune, or of rectifying any loss they may have suffered.

Not only do worldlings display their prudence and foresight in guarding against all harm that might befall what they already enjoy; but, moreover, they carefully avoid exposing their possessions, their honor, their comforts, to danger, and hastily seek to repair all losses.

And in this does their wisdom surpass, by far, the wisdom of the children of God.

Now, that you may profit by to-day's Gospel, let us examine and see if what I have said is not fully verified in the general conduct of Christians.

O Mary, thou wisest and most prudent of all virgins; thou tower of strength; thou seat of wisdom, pray for us, that we may be wise as befits the children of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

The wisdom of a general has occasion to prove itself in planning and commanding a battle, if in number or position he has the advantage of the enemy.

When, however, the enemy surpasses him in the number of troops, or has made unforeseen movements, has received fresh forces and presses him from all sides, thus endangering his army; then, I say, has he an especial opportunity of displaying his talent for strat-

egy. But still more is his military skill seen, if the experience he derived from his loss aids him in achieving even greater victories.

The same may justly be said of every enterprise. To enter upon a business or profession under favorable circumstances, to conduct it well afterwards, is surely to the credit of a business or professional man. No one will hesitate to praise such a man. But to save a business or profession, to keep it flourishing through unforeseen events that endanger it, yea, that menace it with ruin, is still more praiseworthy, more to be admired.

In this regard, the children of the world are remarkably wise, careful and prudent; for how indefatigable are they not in guarding against dangers, in overcoming obstacles, and in drawing benefit from danger itself! As a proof of this, do we not everywhere behold the different institutions they have organized, as divers kinds of insurance corporations, and other business associations, by which to insure their person and their property?

They even risk their life to save, to guard, and to secure their temporal possessions.

What an admonition, what a lesson, for the children of God to secure with a like zeal heavenly treasures, lasting indemnities, eternal salvation! If every one employed, in regard to his immortal soul, the care, the energy, the wisdom and the perseverance which worldlings employ in the pursuit of temporal goods, the path of salvation would no longer be narrow aud rug-

ged; but it would be broad and smooth, and the greater part of the children of God would readily walk upon it towards the open portals of heaven.

The first thing in which the children of the world serve as an example, is the care they exhibit to prevent the dangers which threaten their business, wealth, honor and life. Not only this, but they even remove all occasions of the same.

Would to God that we, too, manifested such anxiety in all that concerns our salvation!

Now, to what danger is our soul exposed, that soul ransomed by the death of the God-man?

The only peril that threatens us is sin. It is the evil of which Christ warns us when He teaches us to pray: "Deliver us from evil."

Sin approaches us by all those paths by which temptation comes.

The Holy Scriptures mention especially the armies of three enemies of salvation that march against us upon the path of temptation, namely: *The Devil, the World, and the Flesh.*

Oh, how important it is for us to be in earnest in saving our souls; in taking care wisely to prevent all temptation, and, should it approach us, bravely to attack and conquer it.

I call your attention first to *the flesh.* This foe shows itself in the irregular desire for sensual gratification and earthly comforts, which desire, as the Apostle says, has existed within us since the fall of Adam.

Each of these inordinate inclinations can become,

for the soul, as flax, from which Satan weaves the ropes with which he, later on, as Holy Writ says, draws his victims to the slaughter bench.

These sinful propensities are at first, perhaps, weak; but they grow with time, and become a fearful power, from whose influence we shall find it almost impossible to free ourselves.

If we would be secure against this, we must carefully examine ourselves, watch over all our desires, and constantly mortify ourselves. We must not only make daily a general, but also a *particular*, examination of conscience, that thus we may not only detect every sinful inclination, but may also tear it out by the roots, and plant the seeds of the opposite virtues.

If this is done, then all is well, our salvation is secured; and whatever temptation may assail us, we shall, with our own constant efforts and God's blessing, conquer and not fall.

The second army which advances against us upon the path of temptation, is the *world*. Through its perverse principles, through the example of those who follow these principles, who allow the world to delude them by the allurements of sensual pleasures, who live but for temporal honor and the gratification of their desires, are we, beloved Christians, surrounded by dangers innumerable. What a dangerous enemy is not the world! For this reason the solemn words, the menaces of Christ and His Apostles. Let us listen to them, and earnestly consider them: "Father, I pray Thee not for the world;" that is, not for the

children of the world, whose only thought is the gratification of their earthly inclinations. Thus speaks Christ Himself. And again: "You can not serve [at the same time] God and mammon [the world]."—"The world will persecute you as it has persecuted Me."—"Who lives with the world will perish with the world." Now, what does this mean in regard to our subject? It means: Be wise; look around you; consider whom you trust; examine whose company you frequent; and, above all, examine yourself, and see if, instead of being filled with the spirit of Christ, you are not animated by the spirit of the world.

If some one had the plague or the yellow fever, or were afflicted with some other contagious disease, how you would shun him! Exercise the same prudence in regard to spiritual diseases, and you avoid the greatest danger that can menace your salvation.

Finally, regarding the temptations with which the devil storms our heart and imagination, remember the admonition of Christ: "Pray,—shun." Resist the *first* attack. Do not *trifle* with the temptation. Resist it perseveringly, and you will be victorious, you will not fall.

Benefit, however, especially by the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, in order to atone for every loss you may have already sustained. Shun all dangerous occasions. Practice prayer; hear Mass. Humble yourself before God; praise and adore His mercy and patience. Give thanks to Him, that He has not already delivered you up to the enemy; that

He has not taken you from this world in your sins. Employ well the time He allows you after you fall into sin.

During the days of life that His goodness grants you, strive to live like men who are wise, not according to the world, in worldly matters; but according to God, in spiritual affairs, by procuring heavenly treasures, honors, joys; by the sanctification of your soul; by adopting the means I have mentioned, and also others which your piety may suggest. Employ the care, the will, and zeal which the children of the world manifest to retrieve any loss they may sustain; and thus, without doubt, you will prove yourselves truly wise; thus you will victoriously consummate your salvation, and secure a blissful hereafter! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Give an account of thy stewardship."—Luke 16.

"GIVE an account of thy stewardship." These words, addressed to each one of us, remind us of the account which we have to render. In the Apostles' Creed, which every true Christian daily repeats, we pronounce this truth in the words: "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

Whosoever thinks of this judgment has reason to fear. Only consider what St. Peter and St. Paul, the two princes of the Apostles, have said of the final reckoning to which all men will be subjected. "I am not conscious to myself of any thing," says St. Paul, "but He who judges me is God;—it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.—No man is justified with God." He judges even our virtues, and we have reason to tremble and say with Job: "Fear seized upon me and trembling." God has even found wickedness in His angels, and it stands written: "He will search Jerusalem with a lamp."

St. Peter says: "If the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

How welcome, therefore, it must be to us when He, who one day will judge us, points Himself to the practice of that virtue, which is especially fitted to save us from this judgment! This Christ does at different times,

and again to-day when He commands us to assist the poor and to do works of charity according to our means.

Let us consider, to-day, how many motives invite us to assist, as much as lies in our power, all those that are needy and poor.

O Mary, mother of mercy, pray for us, that we may be filled with compassion towards all thy suffering children!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

In order to be roused to liberality towards the poor, we need only think how closely allied this disposition of the heart is to the love which, as children of God, we must feel for God, for Christ, for our neighbor, and for ourselves Further, how urgently God, in Holy Writ, admonishes us to fulfill this duty;—how great are the promises and threats contained in Holy Writ in regard to it, and how empty the excuses man makes to shirk its obligations!

I say, first, let us consider how closely the duty to help the needy is united to the great chief commandment of neighborly love. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as *thyself*," says our Lord.

The fulfillment of this duty contains the fulfillment of the entire law; thus Christ teaches us, and thus taught His Apostles. And, moreover, how many are the reasons for fulfilling this duty to its full extent!

First, let us reflect who is our neighbor, if we regard him with the eyes of faith. He is the image of God, bought with the blood of Christ; he is a brother of the Incarnate Son of God!

God, as Creator, therefore, desires, with a divinely great desire, that we all aid each other.

He, however, wishes at the same time to give us an occasion through good works, and especially through works of charity, of earning merits for the life to come. God does not help the needy directly, but wishes it be done by our generous hand. Fraternal assistance is a service done to the Lord Himself; for what we do to our neighbor we do to God Himself.

Should the son of a king or of an emperor be in need while traveling, his royal father would certainly richly reward any one who assisted him; yes, he would recompense him as if the kindness had been done to him personally. In like manner God receives the slightest gift bestowed on those that are in need.

If we can say this of God, as Creator, how much more right have we to assert it when we think of Him as the Redeemer, Who calls all men His brethren, and Who, in fact, by the Incarnation, became their Brother! Christ, speaking of Himself as the coming Judge, says: "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it unto Me." Hence, whatever we do to our neighbor, is an act of love to Christ.

The urgency of this commandment is, moreover, made clear and binding by the very words in which

it is couched, for Christ says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor *as thyself.*" If this is so, then our plan of action lies well defined before us, and can not be doubted; for Christ has also said: "What you would that men should do to you, do ye also to them." This is the commandment of the Lord. I now ask: Does not every one that is in need or sorrow wish to be helped? Very well, let him then help others, if he desires to fulfill the commandment.

I say, further: For the accomplishment of this duty, the most urgent admonitions and promises in Holy Writ are addressed to us: "Give, and it shall be given unto you."—"Whoever gives alms, lends to the Lord and He will repay him."—"Enter into the kingdom which My Father has prepared for you from eternity," says Christ, as Judge of the compassionate. "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy."

How dreadful, on the other hand, is His menace to the hard-hearted: "Depart from Me into everlasting fire!"

But also for the practice of virtue and advancement in perfection, how important it is that we should give alms and do works of charity as much as we are able!

The two chief articles of Christian justice are: Avoid evil,—do good. To do this we need Divine grace, which is emphatically promised us by the Dispenser of grace, if we practice the duty of neighborly love by giving alms.

To give alms, as we read, washes out sin. "Give alms, that God may have pity on thee," says the

Prophet to the wicked king. Of course, this must not be understood as if alms-giving were enough to cleanse us from sin; but rather that God, in consequence of it, looks mercifully down upon us, and sends us grace to recognize, repent and confess our sin, that we may be reconciled to Him and sin no more.

The example of the conversion of infidels and false-believers to the right faith, and the repentance of many great sinners who were kind to the poor, is a proof of the power of mercy.

But also in regard to the practice of virtue we meet with similar promises in the sacred Writings. St. Paul says: "Give, and the sun of your justice will rise to the splendor of midday."

The life of the saints verifies this promise. Pity for the poor was a common characteristic of their lives. The influence this pity has upon our own sanctification is easily explained, when we remember that while we minister to our neighbor's bodily needs, we also feel interested in his spiritual wants, and hence rekindle our religious zeal and are made followers of the saints.

Furthermore, our generosity invites the generosity of God to bestow greater graces upon us, which, while they strengthen us in the pursuit of a more perfect life, will enhance our glory and beatitude in heaven.

Finally, we need only consider how many opportunities every one has in his station and circumstances of life to fulfill, with ardent zeal, this duty of fraternal charity. We find people that are in want every-where;

but One, especially, and this One is Jesus Christ. Let us assist Him by our liberality to churches, priests, schools, and missionaries, in order that our holy faith may be spread over the whole earth.

Some one may object: I am poor myself; or, I have but little. Well, then, give a little of the little you possess, and you have given much in the eyes of God, and He will reward you in this life and in the life to come. And should you have nothing at all to give, then give to the poor your compassion, your prayers. God, who sees into your heart, recompenses your wishes as if they were deeds. Act thus, and Christ will one day address to you also the words: "Enter into My joys!"—Amen!

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"As Jesus drew near Jerusalem, seeing the city, he wept."—Luke 19, 41.

JESUS wept! At the sight of tears we are irresistibly impelled to interrogate the weeper as to the cause of his grief. This is especially the case if conscience lifts up its accusing voice, and in warning accents reminds us that *we* are not wholly innocent in producing those signs of sorrow, and that there is no need for us to ask. If we are moved at the sight of grief in a creature like ourselves—beloved in Christ—what grief should fill our hearts at the thought that Jesus wept; and that our sins and ingratitude had their full share in drawing tears from those divine and pitying eyes! Holy Scripture mentions three different places where Jesus was moved to tears. The first was within sight of the fair but ill-fated city of Jerusalem. The second, by the sepulcher of Lazarus, as he gazed upon the corpse of that beloved friend, who but a few short days before had walked the earth in the strength and beauty of manhood; but upon whom the withering blight of the grave has fallen now. Jesus shed tears upon the cross, and with great vehemence, as we are told by St. Paul. At each of these places

we might, had we been present, have exclaimed: "Lord, why weepest thou?" for most certainly we, in a double sense, have part in those sacred tears.

In the first place, *by our sins* we have often given occasion to the tears of our divine Lord; and secondly, if we are willing we can derive the greatest benefit from them.

I will first present for your consideration Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, and put the question: "Lord, why weepest thou?"

O Mary, who so often didst weep, and for the same reason as that which drew tears from the eyes of thy divine Son, obtain for us from God a portion of that compassion which filled thy heart!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

As Jesus drew near the city He wept. As I have already said, at the sight of a person in tears, we inquire into the cause of his sadness. Much greater then should be our desire to ponder well on the motives which caused our Savior's tears to flow, knowing as we do, that those tears, each one of which was more precious far than the rarest gem, were shed for us—for you, for me, for every soul created by God, that, falling upon our hearts, they might soften them, and bring us to true sorrow for our sins.

Our anxiety to know why the mourner weeps becomes more intense when the tears fall from the eyes

of one who is bound to us by the tie of kindred or of love, and who, therefore, exerts a powerful influence upon our will. This is especially so if we can remove the cause of grief. Such is the known and acknowledged effect of tears. Nay, they frequently affect the beholder to tears also. Witness the Roman poet who said in the name of the whole human race: "If you wish me to weep, then should you weep first." Yes, these tokens of inward grief frequently possess greater moral influence than the eloquence which flows in burning words from the heart to the lips of the most earnest speaker.

Behold that father whose beloved son has forgotten the lessons of piety he learned at his mother's knee, and who, seeming to forget and despise the tender love of that mother, and the constant care of his father, treats their advice with contempt and indifference. Exerting the remnant of his paternal authority, the father insists that the son should accompany him to the priest, who also exerts his utmost to move that obdurate heart, but in vain, and in silence they return to their homes.

But see, the sorrowing father goes before a crucifix and prays. The wayward son, from his own apartment, looks on, unseen, and although he knows well that those petitions are for him he is still unmoved. Suddenly the prayer is hushed, and no sound breaks the silence save the tears and sobs which have burst forth from a heart unable longer to restrain its sorrow. No prayer comes from that father's lips, but he

throws himself on his knees before the image of the crucified One, and silently implores Him to speak again to the heart of his child. And, my dear brethren, those tears fall upon the hard soil of that sinful heart. No longer unmindful of the voice of grace, he hastens to his father's side, crying out: "Forgive, and help me to obtain God's forgiveness!"

Look at that poor mother, whose only daughter has begun to neglect her religious duties, and is entirely absorbed in the fleeting pleasures of the world. Her entreaties seem to have no effect, and, ceasing them for awhile, she has recourse to prayer alone. The daughter, returning from a scene of dissipation, beholds her mother kneeling before the little crucifix, which surmounts the altar in that oratory where, in happier years, she, too, had loved to pray. The wayward child looks on unmoved, no thought of her mother's care over her infant years and up to the present time comes over her heart; but, with a smile for the folly which leads any one to spend the hours of night in prayer, she turns to go. But, lo! the sudden silence arrests her steps, and, gazing within, she sees her mother weeping bitterly, and feels that it is for her. The sight of those tears which bedew her mother's pale and anguished face is too much for her; she seeks her weeping parent's side, and, assuring her of her sorrow, promises to lead a better life.

There is a man who steels his heart against every appeal of charity, and turns a deaf ear to the petitions of the poor. He turns in disgust from the cripple,

who, at the street-corner, stretches forth his hand to solicit alms. Passing on, his attention is fixed upon a woman, who, pale and wan, and robed in mourning garb, crouches on a door-step, holding in her arms a dying child, and neither lifts her eyes nor asks for alms. She is oblivious to all except her child, which is suffering, perhaps, from some contagious disease. This man, who refused to listen to the clamorous petition of the crippled mendicant, stops to inquire into the case of this sorrowing mother, but his questions meet with scarce any reply, for her dim and sunken eyes, from which the tears fall fast, can see naught but her little child. That cold heart is touched and softened, and placing in the mother's hand a piece of glittering gold, he hurries on without waiting to hear her grateful thanks.

Dearly beloved in Christ! if such an effect follow from the tears of frail mortals like ourselves, what power should be possessed by those which Jesus wept?

Christians, could you but look up and behold in this pulpit your Saviour weeping, how deeply would not your hearts be moved! With what feeling you would cry out: "O, dearest Lord! why dost Thou weep?" To this question Christ replied, and, as the fathers remark, He spoke not only to Jerusalem, but to all the sons of men, typified through Jerusalem, the city of God. Our divine Lord has given three reasons for His tears. Let each one ask himself the question: Do these reasons concern me or not? and what can I say to the Lord to assure Him of my fidelity?

So does Jesus complain. He beholds at a glance the millions who were reconciled to Him when arrayed in the white robes emblematic of the innocence to which they aspired; the waters of baptism were poured upon their foreheads, and in each of those souls He beheld a Jerusalem, a city of peace. But later on, when that baptismal innocence had become tarnished, and the grace which was meted out for their salvation, abused and trampled upon, what a terrible sight for Him by Whom those precious souls were created and redeemed! Children of God and heirs of heaven through the sacrament of baptism—and now children of the devil and travelers on the road which leads to eternal woe—oh, can we wonder that Jesus wept?

Ask yourselves, Christians, and be not deceived by the enemy of your salvation, whether you, too, have not given cause for some of those tears! Have you not rendered yourselves guilty in His sight of grievous sin? Have you always been careful to wipe away those divine tears by true repentance and a thorough change of life? If you are still in a state of sin, delay not to console the heart of your weeping Saviour by a good and sincere confession!

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often did I wish to gather thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, but thou wouldst not?"

Here, too, while lamenting over Jerusalem, Jesus beheld the condition of the lukewarm and tepid Christian, who, turning away from the practices of religion, is in great danger of entering the broad and pleasant

road which leads to hell. At the thought of the many graces which that soul would receive and abuse, Jesus wept.

Examine yourselves; has not Jesus reason to weep for you, O Christians, for whom a loving Saviour suffered and died? During how many years, and in how many ways has the Lord been calling and watching for you? He has called you to the practice of virtue, to a life of holiness; but as yet, perhaps, in vain. If so, let me entreat you no longer to disregard His voice, but to give Him from this moment an undivided heart.

Jesus weeps, and His plaintive cry is: "Jerusalem, thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straighten thee on every side, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone." The prophetic vision of Jesus beheld the destruction of the souls whose salvation He had purchased with His precious blood. Will you grieve His sacred Heart by being among the number? Say to Him, rather: "No, dearest Lord and Saviour, those tears shall not be shed in vain, for sincere repentance shall cause my own to flow; and thus, through the memory of those precious drops of sorrow, and the infinite merits of Christ, may my soul at last reach the home of eternal bliss!" Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it."—Luke 19, 41.

JESUS wept. Holy Scripture gives us no record that Jesus was ever seen to laugh, and, in truth, it would seem out of place that the Incarnate Wisdom of God should ever do so. This is plain to us, since the mission of Christ on earth was so essentially one of mercy and divine compassion that it would rather call for tears. Christ consummated the work of Redemption with abundant means for all mankind to secure their salvation; and yet, in such a manner did the divine economy arrange all things, that man retained his free will either to obey or to reject the happiness that might be his. But, alas! how many abuse the grace of God, and stain their souls by mortal sin!

Jesus wept as He drew near Jerusalem. He wept as He beheld in spirit the precious souls for whom His sufferings would be fruitless, because they would abuse and trample upon His grace. But there were other occasions when He wept. We know that He shed tears at the sepulcher of Lazarus; but do we know what we are to understand therefrom? It is, my dear brethren, that our Lord, to whom the years of time are as naught, saw, in one moment, the many Christians who, in every age of the world, in every year, in every month and day and moment of the passing years, would insult His Adorable Majesty, and

trample upon his ineffable goodness. And this not only by the deliberate commission of grievous sins, from time to time; but by becoming habitual sinners, and burying their poor souls in the yawning grave of mortal sin.

The thought of this loathsome grave drew tears from the sorrowing Saviour, as He stood by the sepulcher of His departed friend.

O Mary, pray for us, that this very day may witness our resolution to free ourselves, cost what it may, from the galling chains of mortal sin!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

If the act of falling into sin, of falling from the state of grace into a state most hateful to God, of changing a child of God into a child of the devil, is already something so sad and horrible that the very consideration of it moved our Saviour to tears, all the reasons and motives for sadness, which are inseparable from such a spiritual condition, apply with greater force when a soul not only turns away from God by sin, but remains in it, and aggravates the malice of the offense by frequent relapses.

The deep and ever-increasing sadness that oppressed the heart of the loving Jesus, at the sight of the habitual sinner, has its origin in the malice of sin, in its aggravated ingratitude, and in the scandals from which the life of the habitual sinner is scarcely ever

exempt. The lamentable state of the habitual sinner lies in the great malice of sin itself. The more clearly the sinner is able to recognize this malice, the greater it becomes; and, the greater the abuse of grace, the more guilty he is before God—by his relapses, and the danger of final impenitence, to which he exposes himself.

Thus it is, however, with the relapsing sinner. After he has defaced his soul—that fair temple of the Holy Ghost—by mortal sin, he presents himself to the priest, he confesses his guilt; and, from the exhortations he receives in the sacred tribunal, he clearly perceives its atrocity.

There are many who, for years, commit sin after sin, whilst the prayer of Christ upon the cross: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," may be aptly applied to them; but this can not be said of the habitual sinner, who confesses and relapses again into sin. He knows well that what he does is evil; but, as time goes on, it gradually loses, with him, its heinous character, and appears less horrible than the first time he yielded to the tempter. Poor, foolish, deluded sinner! he fain would persuade himself that his soul is not so deeply stained with guilt as his confessor would have him believe; and, in his self-conceit, he imagines himself to be wiser than the minister of God. He goes on thus, until at last he is given over to a reprobate state. Had he committed but one sin, and had God then called him away, his soul would have been lost forever.

In heaven the angels fell, and the Lord did not pardon even one of those bright spirits; but condemned them to dwell forever in that fire which was enkindled by the wrath of an angry God.

Christ has said, that swiftly as the lightning's flash Satan fell from heaven to hell. He is and will remain forever lost, together with the rebellious hosts who chose to sin with him; and the relapsing sinner, instead of being grateful that he has been spared, not once, but many times, offends anew, not only in thoughts, but in desires, words and acts. At each offense, he grows more indifferent to his dreadful state, and Jesus weeps over his blindness. By what miracle will he be saved? If the warning threats of holy faith, and the admonitions upon those eternal consequences, which will inevitably result from sin, no longer exercise any power over him, what will be his fate hereafter? He is so accustomed to hear of God, of death, judgment, eternity, and hell, that it all falls unheeded on his ear.

If the bad angels, before their fall, had had such an example as the sinner, through their fall and judgment, has ever before his eyes, we may be sure they would never have sinned. If it could be that they might still possess their freedom, and such assistance of divine grace as man can always have, both as a sinner and as a faithful child of the Church,—if he wish to return to God, or if he is firm in the practice of his religion, and wishes to remain so,—there would not be one of the infernal spirits who would reject the

means of salvation. The heathen sins, and grievously; but how much greater the crime of the sinner who knows, by the grace of faith, the heinousness of sin, and yet closes his eyes, and, by his willful relapses, goes to eternal perdition!

In regard to strength of will, the habitual sinner grows constantly weaker and less able to resist temptation; and, indeed, searches for new and more dangerous occasions to offend his Creator. Jesus is weeping!

The relapsing sinner stifles the voice of his conscience until its whispers sound like the echo of something faint and far away, so that he soon ceases to hear it, and at last ventures so far as to abuse the means which God left within His Church for the pardon of sin, viz.: the Sacrament of Penance. Jesus is weeping!

The crime of a sacrilegious confession causes the most intense grief to the loving heart of our Saviour, in the case of the habitual sinner; for it is there, above all, that this presumptuous creature dares to trample under foot the precious blood of Christ, to mock and scourge the Lord; and then, by an unworthy communion, to spit upon Jesus, who is really present in his heart, and deliver Him to His enemies. Jesus is weeping!

What a fearful stench arose from the decaying corpse of Lazarus! From the sinner, who is buried in the deep grave of sin, the same is exhaled. It comes from the thousands of crawling worms of shameful thoughts, words, desires and actions which

will in time consume the total essence of his vocation to be a true child of God, and give bad example to others, so that they, too, infected by the pestilential vapor, with which such a soul is surrounded, will begin to offend God.

Christ looks upon the terrible effect which association with habitual sinners produces. His heart is sad. His soul is sorrowful, even unto death. Jesus is weeping!

Ask yourselves, now, whether there is any reason that He should weep over you! whether there is any mortal sin on your soul, or, still worse, whether that sin has become habitual! Would to God that this were the hour of grace, when the Lord in His mercy would call out to you, as He did to Lazarus: "Come forth!" O Christians, for the sake of your precious souls, come forth, I entreat you! Do it without delay! Be converted, and console the heart of the weeping Jesus, by a life of piety, in which relapse into sin will have no place! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And when He drew near, seeing the city, He wept over it."—Luke 19, 41.

JESUS wept, as Jerusalem, the beautiful, came into view, but it was not alone the sorrows of that ill-fated city which drew tears from His eyes; for, as I have before stated, Jerusalem is an emblem of the human soul, the literal meaning of the word being "City of Peace." The soul, as it came from God, on the day of its creation, in perfect harmony with Him, was indeed at peace; and, after the fall, through the merits of Christ, such is again its condition as soon as it is supernaturally united with Him by the regenerating waters of baptism.

Would to God that all who have had the happiness of being united with the holy Church by baptism, would persevere in their innocence unto the end! Would to God, at least, that each fallen soul, if a child of the Church, would shrink from remaining for years and years in a state of sin and rebellion against God, and hasten to the refuge of the tribunal of penance, so aptly styled a second baptism!

But the Gospel mentions still another time when tears were forced from the eyes of our blessed Lord. And where was this? Where else did our Saviour weep? The place, my dear friends, was one, the very name of which must appeal with more eloquence to

your hearts than could the most pathetic sermon; for it was the spot whereon the Saviour's cruel sufferings for our sins were consummated—Mount Calvary! This most patient Redeemer, this most loving Saviour, this meek and innocent Lamb of God wept, because, looking down the long vista of years, which would witness the birth and death of millions, for whose salvation He hung upon the cross, *He saw that many, in spite of all He had endured, would be forever lost!*

O Mary, who, under "the world's redeeming wood," didst unite the sorrow which oppressed thy maternal heart with the anguish of thy Son, by those tears which thou didst shed, grant that the words which I address unto thy children, to-day, may bring forth fruit a thousand-fold!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Jesus wept on the cross, "with a strong cry, and tears," as St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, tells us. And how, indeed, could it be otherwise? As the Saviour, Who was from all eternity chosen to redeem the human race, He had, as man, the most feeling, the most tender, the most compassionate heart. He alone could compute how many tears of compassion and mediation He shed for us, not only for the entire human race, but for every soul in particular, during His life, offering those tears in union with His prayers to His eternal Father.

This was especially so when He completed the work of redemption upon the cross. He beheld from that cross the total misery in which sin had plunged the children of men, as well as the horror of each individual sin. He, and He only,—the Judge of the living and the dead,—realized the number and atrocity of the sins which would corrupt the world. What motive could be more powerful for His sacred heart to be oppressed with anguish, than that which was found in the sad truth that those sins would be so many outrages committed against His heavenly Father!

His infinite merits, however, could offer compensation for them, no matter how heinous, if only man, by his co-operation with them, would resolve to avail himself of them, and work out his salvation. Could Christ have been consoled by this sight, He would not have wept upon the cross; or, at least, instead of tears of anguish, He would have shed tears of joy.

But, as King of the Prophets, before Whose all-seeing eye the most secret things are manifest, He beheld the innumerable souls who would be lost in the flames of hell! Hence those tears of utter sorrow such as were never shed before or since. And what more did the prophetic vision of Jesus show Him? That numbers of the children of men, by their own fault, not only would not participate in His sacrifice and merits, but, to their greater torment and perdition, would abuse them. Can we wonder that, when the conviction of all that was to happen overwhelmed the Sacred Heart with the concentrated agony of Gethsemane

and Golgotha, those bitter tears were forced from His dying eyes?

Oh! what are all the tears which, since the world began, have been shed by sorrowing husbands and wives, parents and children, compared to those which fell when Jesus wept? Souls redeemed by Him, who listen to my voice, console Him by tears like unto those which Mary Magdalen and St. John wept, as they stood beneath the cross.

If the thought of the many who would fling away the benefits of His sufferings so grieved our divine Saviour that He wept, His tears flowed still more freely when, from the cross, He saw His weeping mother, the weeping disciple,—the weeping penitent; but these tears were full of sweetness. If you would console our Lord, and show Him that His merits are not, through your own fault, lost upon you, mingle your tears with those of the three who loved Him so well.

To understand this better, we need but to consider what tears are those which come from the heart of a Christian who believes and loves and hopes; who reflects that they are united with all that encourages and strengthens us so to live that, through the merits of Christ, our sanctification and salvation shall be secured. In this regard they are tears of devotion, compassion, and reparation.

True devotion is that of which Christ says that it is a prayer in spirit and in truth; that is, a prayer of meditation upon the truths revealed by faith.

St. Paul says: "Let us draw near (God) . . .

in fullness of faith." One whose faith is very lively, is easily moved to tears by the consideration of what faith teaches concerning our eternal destination, our fall and redemption through Christ. It was thus with Mary Magdalen beneath the cross. She contemplated the greatness of the infinite mercy of God, who, in order to rescue the sinner, sacrificed His only-begotten Son. Oh! how deeply did this thought affect her as she looked up to her beloved Saviour!

Christian, do you wish to dry the tears of Jesus? Ponder well, and take deeply to heart these truths: Who is He? What has He done for you? What glorious rewards has He promised? and you will shed tears of devotion which will strengthen you, for you are required not only to believe, but to live according to holy faith.

We are also moved to tears by compassion for the misery of others, especially if we have been the cause of their sorrow, and if they are united to us by the bonds of friendship or of blood. Mary Magdalen, at the foot of the cross, realized these feelings to the utmost. She saw the painful wounds of our Lord, and conscience vividly reminded her that *her* sins had inflicted many of them upon Him, Who was at once her Father, Brother, Friend, the Spouse of her soul!

Ransomed soul of man! ponder this well, comfort Jesus by your tears of compassion, and you will have every reason to cherish the hope that you will be saved! Weep for His sorrows, weep for the danger to which man's salvation is ever exposed! What rea-

son we have to elevate our tearful gaze to heaven, with the ejaculation: "Lord, save us!" God will not be unmindful of your prayers and tears; for the petition of the faithful heart is always heard.

The last motive which should excite our tears is, *reparation*. If we have offended One to whom we owe the happiness of our lives, how grieved should we be! Thus it was with Mary Magdalen. The sins of her whole life rose up before her spiritual vision, as she stood at the foot of the cross. Imitate her, beloved in Christ, and be assured that Jesus will not be unmindful of your sorrow, but will blot out your guilt, and then in you will be verified the words: "They who sow in tears will reap in joy!"—Amen!

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray."—Luke 18, 10.

WHAT a remarkable contrast presents itself to our view when we compare the two men. Christ informs us that "they went up into the temple to pray." The prayer of the Pharisee, properly speaking, was not a prayer, for it contained more self-gratulation than praise of God. Moreover, the very language of the prayer breathed sentiments directly contrary to the precept of fraternal charity; for the haughty Pharisee looked scornfully down upon the humble publican, and dared to pass sentence upon the state of his soul. If he really believed him to be a sinner, he should have prayed for his conversion; but the prayer to which he did give utterance, was one which certainly did not ascend to God like a sweet odor, for the pride by which it was prompted rendered it most offensive in His sight, but pleasing to the king of hell.

But, dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, what ample reason have we not to lament that, while such numbers among the children of our Holy Church throng to the house of God, but few among them really pray.

On the contrary, those terrible words of the Psalmist:

"His prayer shall be turned to sin," are accomplished in many Christians. And why?

Here we need only compare the meaning of the petitions with which Christ taught us to pray, and the dispositions which frequently animate the hearts of those who profess to pray, and we will perceive but too clearly that prayer often becomes a mockery.

O Mary, vessel of singular devotion, obtain for us, thy children, the grace of fervent, sincere and humble prayer!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Our prayer, to be acceptable, must correspond with that one which Christ taught His children, and which is the model of genuine prayer; and we must examine our hearts to discover how it is with us in this regard. So far from this being the case with habitual sinners, they are Pharisees and hypocrites when they pray; and, by their so-called devotions, they offer, not prayers, but insults to God.

"Our Father." Thus, according to the direction of Christ, should we begin. But to have the right to call God *Father*, we must be in the state of grace, otherwise one is not a child of God, but a child of the devil—a child of Him between whom and his Creator must be perpetual enmity.

To the angels it must be indeed terrible to listen to the prayers of one who, being in mortal sin, and

like unto the devil himself, presumes to look up to heaven, and address their Creator by that endearing name.

"Hallowed be Thy name." Oh, what derision and contempt of God are contained in those words when pronounced by sinful souls! Sinner, with the lips indeed you pray that the name of God may be blessed, while your life and acts profane it fearfully; for every sin that you commit is an insult to that most holy name, to His dominion over all creatures, to His omniscience, to His omnipotence, to His justice and sanctity. Yes, practically, you deny and despise every one of those divine attributes; and how can you dare to say: "Hallowed be Thy name?" *You* who, perhaps, as the days pass on, can not count a single one in the entire year upon which you have not profaned that sacred name!

"Thy kingdom come." So has Christ taught us to pray, and so presumes to pray the sinner whose soul is black with guilt. Oh, what an insult to the Lord of that kingdom appears in this mockery of prayer! How easily flow those words from the lips of the sinful Christian; but what says his life? What are we to understand by the words: "Thy kingdom come"? By this we beg that God will come and reign in our hearts by His grace. You say: "Thy kingdom come," and yet, with deliberate malice, you destroy it continually by committing fresh sins. While the morning service on Sundays witnesses your devotions, the evening revel renders your attendance there indeed a mockery.

Your lips cry out: "Thy kingdom come;" but your actions call upon the Lord to remain far away with the kingdom of His grace.

In the second place, this kingdom signifies exteriorly the Church of Christ, which, in accordance with the wish of its divine Founder, each one of its children should strive, with the utmost zeal, to propagate. Sinner, praying sinner, listen to my voice, and believe the words I speak to you to-day! Instead of propagating it, striving to gain souls for it, seeking to convert infidels from the error of their ways, and to admonish sinners, how is it with you? Instead of inciting, by your example, those who are already holy, to new and greater efforts, you give scandal by your wicked life, and become a snare to innocent souls for their ruin and damnation. Upon you, indeed, might well be fastened that millstone of which Christ speaks, and with which he threatens all who give scandal. Take heed lest by its weight you be drawn one day down, down, to the fathomless abyss of hell!

"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Christ has taught us to pray in this manner, and the sinner does not stop to reflect upon the mockery which such a petition becomes upon his lips; but dares to present himself before the throne of grace. And what says his miserable, sinful life? So far from caring for those things which he knows well are pleasing to God, and trying to do His holy will, his aim is, by every possible means, to gratify his own sinful propensities. Sinner, do you know what Christ requires of us? "Be ye

holy, as your Father in heaven is holy. Be ye perfect, as He is perfect."

You call yourself a child of the one true Church, and yet it never enters into your thoughts to lead a holy life; perhaps, indeed, never *has* entered therein, even once, during the days and months and years which God has given you to work out your salvation. Perhaps you have never once thought of breaking the galling chain by which the devil binds you to himself. How then, O sinner, can you dare to say: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"?

"Give us this day our daily bread." This is one of the petitions of that prayer which was taught by the Lord Himself, and the recreant Christian blushes not to join therein; but what says the story of his life?

Sinner, you know well that while solicitous for the good things of this life, you act as if you scorned the idea of a divine Providence, and were able to procure all temporal blessings of yourself alone. You allow the thorns of worldly cares to grow up so fast and thick that they destroy the good seed of the Divine Word, and prevent the calls of grace being heard. You are not content with bread alone, that is, with the necessaries of life; but crave for more, that you may give yourself up entirely to your evil passions, and gratify the demands of that pride of life to which you are a slave. You give no thought to the supernatural daily bread of the altar, except when the Church, laying aside that voice of entreaty which at other periods of the year her maternal heart impels her to use, threatens

you with all the penalties of ecclesiastical severity. Even then, it may be, O sinner, that you approach the sacred table only to burden your soul with the additional crime of sacrilege; but may God, in His infinite mercy, preserve you from so great an evil.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Oh, divine words of Christ, too often made the subject of mockery and blasphemy by the unforgiving Christian. Why? Dearly beloved in Christ, we need only consider the petition itself: "*Forgive me as I forgive.*" Yet you do not forgive, therefore your prayer is a petition for God to condemn you to hell! Oh, what blasphemy!

"Lead us not into temptation." Presumptuous sinner! so do you venture to speak and to pray to God, and yet you go in search of temptation, and regret when the occasion is wanting to gratify lust.

"But deliver us from evil." How can this be done, when you encourage such evil dispositions? Can it be? No; a thousand times no! Therefore, to all here present, who feel that they have offended God by mortal sin, I would say: When you feel moved to pray, from the depths of your heart, first cry out: "Have mercy on me, O Lord." Then, without ceasing, call upon God, asking Him to give you the grace of repentance, that you may return to Him, and live as His true child; that thus your prayer, rising up to heaven, may find favor with our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"O God! I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men."—Luke 18, 11.

THE Pharisee, of whom Christ speaks in this day's Gospel, thanked God that he was not like other men. How many who pray—pray frequently—and know full well that prayer is necessary for all who would live, as true children of God, a life of sanctity on earth to prepare them for a life of bliss in heaven, have ample reason to say, with the deepest and most heart-felt sadness: Lord, I pray indeed, and more than other men, yet I do not lead a better life than they, and what can be the cause?

We have, in a previous meditation, glanced at the Christian, who, although given to the commission of mortal sin, and, therefore, possessing no right to call God by the endearing name of *Father*, does not refrain from the recitation of the Lord's prayer, heedless that its petitions are but mockery upon his lips. But, to-day, another picture is held up before our eyes, as we are called upon to consider those children of the Church who are in the state of grace, and, therefore, desirous of praying in spirit and in truth to obtain graces from the Lord to enable them to walk justly and piously in His sight.

It would appear that in *their* prayers nothing would be wanting, and, nevertheless, they exercise not the

proper influence—because they do not pray with the proper dispositions of the heart.

The real presence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar—His hidden sacramental life—will teach us how our hearts should be disposed, that our prayers may be pleasing to God and beneficial to ourselves.

O Mary, who, according to divine tradition, didst ever remain most intimately united in prayer with Jesus after His ascension into heaven, and didst frequently adore Him in the Sacrament of His love, obtain for us, through this precious legacy, the grace of true and fervent prayer!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

In the Gospel we find the record that two of the disciples once approached our Lord with the petition: "Lord, teach us to pray," and Christ enjoined upon them to say: "Our Father, who art in heaven." We know this prayer, my brethren, and have recited it from our earliest infancy, and how can it be that this sacred prayer, and all our prayers, which are, indeed, included in it, are so ineffectual for the sanctification of our lives? Because that disposition of heart, of which the hidden life of Jesus in the tabernacle reminds us, is wanting.

Both the Pharisee and the publican went to the temple to pray. In the temple of the Jews there was,

it is true, a tabernacle; but it was not inhabited, it was empty, save for some memorials of the particular protection of God over the people of Israel.

How different it is with our churches, each one of which possesses a tabernacle, and within that lowly dwelling, at every hour of the day or night, can be found the same Jesus to Whom the Apostles and Disciples drew near, as they exclaimed: "Lord, teach us to pray!" Let us approach the Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament with the same petition, and His hidden life, beneath those mystic veils, will give us the most complete and satisfactory answer, if we are only willing to consider it, and make a practical and beneficial application of it to our lives.

Jesus dwells in this Sacrament lowly, and often alone, and, as it were, almost in a state of annihilation. If we would pray, so that our prayer may lead us on in the way of perfection, we must learn the lesson which Jesus, from His little earthly home, so loves to teach—the lesson of *humility* before God—the lesson of our unworthiness in His eyes. Then will our prayers become actual petitions, and we will grow earnest in our endeavors to tear from our hearts that pride so fatal to true virtue; for it is written that "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."

Secondly, Christ abides in the Most Holy Sacrament totally *disengaged* from all earthly cares and temporal possessions,—in poverty, yet wholly undisturbed thereby. St. Paul assures us, that in His Incarnation and during His visible life on earth, our divine Lord

was poor, living by manual labor and the alms of the charitable, wearing the garb of the poor and lowly. Yet He possessed raiment—simple as it was. Even upon the cross His sacred limbs were partially covered, and concealed from the rude gaze of the rabble, by a linen cloth! But in the Most Holy Sacrament His only visible possessions are the sacramental forms—the mystic veil which hides the splendor of His majesty!

What a lesson for us, if we wish to pray sincerely, "in spirit and in truth!" if we wish our prayer to be really an elevation of the soul to God! And it may be so; but we must first learn from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament how to free that heart from all attachment to the transitory goods and fleeting pleasures of this earth, also from all excessive solicitude regarding temporal things, which are compared by our divine Lord to those thorns which choke and destroy the good seed of the word of God.

It is this undue solicitude about the things of earth that render our prayers so cold and unavailing. Instead of beginning according to the Divine admonition, with the words: "Our Father, who art in heaven," and trying to fix our thoughts on that heaven where He is, perhaps we allow them constantly to wander to terrestrial goods and schemes. This is true, even of those who wish to live, and in some measure do live, as good Catholics. Their prayer begins with the petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." Earthly wishes, earthly cares, fill up and oppress the heart,

and weigh down the soul, chaining it to earth, and preventing it from speaking to God of its wants and needs, and from uniting itself daily to Him.

You ask, my dear Christians, why you are so distracted during prayer. I have given the reason. So much more are you engrossed with earth than with that eternity which draws nearer each moment, that you merit this reproach by Christ from the tabernacle: "You are careful about many things, but one thing is necessary."

Yes, if eternity were more earnestly pondered upon, you would have no cause to lament over these defects in your devotions, and your prayer would then exercise the most salutary influence over your daily lives.

Jesus abides in the tabernacle, *secluded* from all intercourse with men, in the deepest solitude. From this characteristic of our Lord's life, we may learn the third condition required to render prayer pleasing to God and beneficial to the petitioner. It inculcates the avoidance of too much intercourse with the world and creatures. An intimate union with God requires great recollection of spirit, to which the dissipating influence of society is not favorable. Look into your hearts, and read therein too great an inclination for this intercourse with the votaries of pleasure, and for vain and frivolous conversation, whereby you open your hearts to innumerable idle thoughts and vain temptations.

Even that holy man, Thomas a Kempis, has said

that as often as he went among men, he returned less a man; that is, the desire to please God, which to man, created in His image and likeness, should be paramount, was always weakened by association with others! What, then, shall I say of that intercourse which is not only unprofitable but sinful—intercourse with those who are filled with the spirit of the world? The Holy Scripture warns you that by associating with the wicked you also will become wicked!

Try, then, beloved in Christ Jesus, to withdraw from all useless and distracting intercourse, and you will no longer complain that your prayers do not contribute to your sanctification.

Jesus lives in the Most Holy Sacrament in a state of total *self-denial*, or rather of self-annihilation. Humanly speaking, He has not the use of His senses. Certainly, He *has* full possession of them, and is there really present, but under those forms which hide His Omnipotence; His condition is that of one who can neither see, nor hear, nor move, nor utter a single word, nor take the slightest portion of food!

This characteristic of the sacramental life of Jesus indicates a most important requisite for rendering our prayers acceptable to God, viz: we must lead a truly mortified and self-denying life, leaving the world and its enjoyments to those who are of the world.

Do you know why your prayers are so tepid, distracted, and fruitless? Because you are too eager for pleasure, too ready to plunge into those dangerous enjoyments which are unseemly for a soul redeemed

by Christ. With each one it is different, but whatever be the taste or propensity which lures one away from God, the effect is the same. Love of prayer grows weaker and weaker in the heart, which is the seat of a thousand distracting thoughts. How could it be otherwise? A prayer which, in a greater or less degree, as the heart is more or less distracted, is cold, or tepid, will never delight the one who utters it with that sweetness which affords, even on earth, a foretaste of heavenly joy. Overcome yourselves for Christ's sake, and you will pray with far more devotion, and lead more fervent lives.

Lastly, the sacramental life of Jesus is one continual prayer. Christ Himself says: "We must pray always," and what will best lead us to this never-ceasing prayer? What more fitting, my dearest brethren, than an intimate and loving union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Oh! how happy is that Christian whose conscience bears testimony that he lives wholly absorbed in this treasure, thus making his prayers most precious to the sacred Heart of our Saviour, and his whole life a perpetual oblation of prayer! Thus his soul will be an object of delight in the sight of God!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"—Luke 18.

"GOD, be merciful to me, a sinner!" was the prayer of the repentant publican, who, venturing not to lift his eyes to heaven, found grace before God, and "went home justified."

Our Lord specifies the principal reason for this reconciliation with God in the words: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted!" Dearly beloved in Christ Jesus, we have heretofore, in reading this Gospel, considered the wide difference of the prayers addressed to their Creator by the two men "who went into the temple to pray." Too often in our own day it is the case that Christians go to the temple of God to offer up their petitions; but how do they pray? Alas! their prayers are an insult to the adorable majesty of God. Mark it well; both of those men went to the temple of the Lord, and both were sinners. One recognized and confessed his fault, and went home justified. Far different was it with the other, who was blinded by pride and self-sufficiency.

I will make the application to our lives as children of the Church in another relation, and say: How often do we not see Christians thronging in crowds to the confessional, that they may be cleansed from their sins; yet how often are their confessions the semblance only of confession, the absolution of the priest an illu-

sion, the reception of the Most Holy Sacrament a profanation! And why?

Because there is such a want of humility among those who profess to be penitent, that they find their prototypes in the proud Pharisee instead of the humble publican.

O Mary, virgin most humble, obtain for us true humility of heart, that we may be effectually cleansed from every stain of sin in the sacred tribunal of penance!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart," says our divine Lord. "Humility is the foundation of all virtues," the holy fathers cry out. St. Augustine writes: "Ask me what is virtue, and I answer—humility; ask me again, and I say humility; ask me yet a third time, and a third time would my answer be, humility." So it is; even as, according to the declaration of Holy Scripture, pride is the root of every vice, so is humility the beginning of every virtue; nay, even more, it is the foundation of the conditions necessary for the forgiveness of sins. It constitutes that disposition of heart upon which depends our reconciliation with God, if we have had the misfortune of being separated from Him by sin. The reason for this is given in the declaration of the Council of Trent, which teaches that man of himself is not able, without a par-

ticular grace, to arrive at a proper knowledge of his sins, much less to deplore and confess them, in order to obtain forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance.

Now, Holy Scripture expressly declares that "God gives grace to the humble." If you wish to receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily and in an effective manner, the first requisite—it can not be too often repeated—is humility. This can be seen from the examples in Holy Scripture, wherein, whenever there is question of the pardon of sin, this virtue is spoken of. David humbled himself, Nineveh humbled itself, the prodigal son threw himself at the feet of his father, the publican ventured not even to lift up his eyes, Mary Magdalen is every-where represented kneeling at the feet of Christ; all these illustrious penitents were penetrated with that deep and heart-felt humility which is but too often lacking in those who seek pardon for their sins in the Sacrament of Penance. O my dear Christians! pray to God for an increase of this virtue, for, be assured, that no prayer but that of the humble will pierce the clouds, and ascend like incense before the Lord.

Many approach this Sacrament with their hearts puffed up with self-conceit, and without a trace of that suppliant entreaty to God: "O Lord, enlighten me, and have mercy on me, that I may know my sins, and confess them so as to obtain through thy infinite merits a full pardon, and that peace which the world can not give!"

Let us consider the conditions necessary for making

a good confession. First, we must know our sins; humility will guide us to self-knowledge. The proud man does not readily admit his failings, but finds ample excuse for what, in another, he would deem sins of wonderful magnitude. *Pride* steps in, and not only enables him to palliate, but even to transform evil-doings into what has at least the semblance of right, and sometimes of virtue.

Whosoever is thus disposed will give himself but little anxiety about cleansing his soul from venial faults in the sacrament of reconciliation; for to him it may even seem a condescension to declare the transgressions he admits to be mortal.

Humble yourselves, and you will receive light from the Spirit of Light, the Holy Ghost, to know your sins; and grace will be added for the obtaining of true *contrition* for them, which may be called the most important requisite for making a good confession. For what will a thorough knowledge of your sins avail if you be not sorry for them? This self-knowledge and contrition must be accompanied by a firm resolution to sin no more, and this resolution must be based on humility.

But the proud man does not feel that grief and horror for sin which its enormity should inspire. Therefore he contents himself with but little preparation for confession. Oh! how different are the sentiments of the truly humble Christian, who, when he has had the misfortune to fall into sin, exclaims with the deepest contrition: "O my God and my all! God

of infinite goodness and holiness, my God and Creator, my Redeemer and Father, my only Benefactor, how have I dared to oppose myself to thee, to offend thee? No more sin, O my God!"

Mark it well: "*No more sin*," for what is the sentiment of sorrow without a resolution of amendment, but a mere illusion? And what will enable you to keep that resolution? I say, and repeat—*humility, humility!* This golden virtue removes the bandage from the eyes of the sinner, the penitent sinner, and teaches him to distrust his own strength, and to follow the admonition of Christ: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out; or if thy hand or thy foot, cut it off." Cost what it may, the Christian who wishes to save his soul must avoid every occasion of sin, and distrust himself. This the proud man does not, and consequently his resolutions are not kept. But how is it with the second part of this Sacrament—*confession?* What renders so many confessions not only imperfect, but sacrilegious? The concealment of some mortal sin; for men do not confess as fully as they should. And why is this? Dearly beloved in Christ, they listen to the promptings of shame. Oh, wretched shame! which closes the lips of so many in this sacred tribunal, and leads its victims to ruin and to hell! Too often does it transform the soul of the penitent into a sealed book, the secrets of which the confessor can not penetrate. And this is especially so if the latter be the pastor or parish priest, as is generally the case. Oh, how many reasons there are to urge any well in-

structed child of the Catholic Church to conquer this false shame, and to encourage every faithful soul to confess without reserve! The priest is the representative of God, of His infinite mercy. He is a type of the good Samaritan, of the Good Shepherd, of the loving Father. What he hears as confessor he hears not at all as man. Even looking upon him as man and your pastor, you would wish to stand high in his estimation. Oh, let him feel, then, that you truly confess every mortal sin that lies upon your conscience, and every circumstance connected therewith, and he will from his very heart, thank God who has bestowed upon you such lively faith and such confidence in him, as well as such profound humility. He will rejoice that he has been an instrument in the hands of God to save your soul from perdition.

Therefore, O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, be merciful unto us, and so penetrate our hearts with the virtue of humility that we may be enabled to conquer and trample upon that false shame, which, if yielded to, will bring eternal ruin! Amen!

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb, and they besought Him that He would lay His hands upon him."—Mark 7, 32.

THOSE portions of the Gospels which are read to the faithful in the course of the ecclesiastical year seem to be selected, it might almost be said, at random from the Sacred Scriptures. To the preacher, also, whose duty it is to discourse, year after year, from those fragments, it might at first sight appear difficult to make a practical application of this or that Gospel to the spiritual wants of his hearers. This, however, is not so; for, as each Gospel is in turn presented for the instruction of the faithful, it will become more evident that the Word of God is a manna which contains the most varied and delicious tastes, and, moreover, that it impresses the mind as being the ever new and yet immutable truth of the word of Him Whom St. Augustine addressed as "Beauty always ancient yet ever new."

Indeed, if the preacher were every year to direct the attention of his hearers to the same important point of doctrine, it would be, even to the very same congregation, most interesting as well as instructive, since every word of the Gospel is intimately connected

with the great work of redemption; for instance, the lesson for this Sunday tells us how Christ vouchsafed to heal the deaf and dumb man.

Let us consider how deaf the human race has ever been to the Word of God, and whatever relates to their salvation.

O Mary, whose heart was ever open to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, obtain for us the same readiness to receive the admonitions of the Spirit of Love and Truth!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

If there is any thing which should call forth our astonishment, it is this spiritual deafness of the human race, both individually and collectively, and the incredible indifference manifested in regard to all that God has revealed concerning our existence and eternal destination—the fall of man, his redemption, and that eternity which draws nearer each day. This disposition was manifest even in paradise, before the fall, and afterwards developed itself to such an enormous extent as to justify the assertion, that after our first parents had yielded to the seductions of Satan, their whole posterity became afflicted with this voluntary deafness.

As I have already said, this disposition was perceptible when the fidelity of our first parents was put to the test, for they seemed to give a more ready ear to the seducing wiles of the tempter than to the warning

voice of God. Yes, it would seem that our first mother found something far more attractive in the alluring voice of the devil, and the delicious taste of the fruit, than in the exercise of the obedience which she owed to her Maker and Sovereign Lord. His divine command was unheeded and despised at the intimations of greatness conveyed by the serpent: "You shall be as gods."

Adam and Eve fell, and, with them, the race of man became subject to sin and death. But God, in His mercy, decreed that His well-beloved Son should redeem and save the souls created for eternal happiness.

But, alas! Cain, the first-born of the human kind, closed his heart to the inspirations of divine grace, and stained the earth with his brother's blood! And in every age of the world so many, many souls have been found to follow in his footsteps, that, as time wore on, the human race became more and more deaf to the voice of God, and its ways seemed perverted to the ways of iniquity.

Noah, for a hundred years, spoke in terms of entreaty, as well as warning; but his words fell upon ears which refused to heed. He built the ark amid the jeers and mockery of those who looked on in scorn; and, even after the deluge, how soon did heathenism stifle the voice of conscience, and close the ears of the soul!

Almighty God set apart for Himself a nation, through which the whole human family might receive warning and instruction, and be prepared for that wonderful

and much-desired event—the birth of the Redeemer of the world.

Yet how did the world behave towards this people? We need only look at Pharao. Moses spoke to him, threatening him in the name of the Lord. He listened, yet heard not, for he was obdurate. Again, Moses appeared, and spoke in terms of terrible warning to the wicked king. God sends him various punishments; noxious insects of every kind infest the land, and cause fearful destruction; the waters change into blood; the light of the sun is darkened; the destroying angel spares not the first-born of the Egyptians; and, nevertheless, the hearts of Pharao and his people remained closed to the voice of God. Hearing it exteriorly, they despised it interiorly, until the Lord stretches forth his avenging arm, and the waters of the Red Sea engulf that rebellious host in their terrible depths.

And even in regard to the chosen people of God, was not their spiritual deafness astonishing and deplorable? Amid the thunder's roll and the lightning's flash the Israelites listen as the commands of God are proclaimed; but even while they listen they turn away unheeding, and, in spite of the wonders they witness, pay homage to a golden calf. God sends them a succession of prophets, and they put them all to death.

Christ Himself appears. He speaks,—He, the Incarnate Wisdom of God. The people throng around Him; but that class of priests, so wise in their own estimation, yet so totally depraved,—the scribes and

Pharisees,—cry out in tones of scorn: "Which of us hears Him?"

Ascending to heaven, Christ sends His Apostles to announce to all mankind the word of salvation. The Holy Ghost, the promised Paraclete, appears in the form of fiery tongues, above their heads; and, taking in the utmost boundaries of the earth, they proclaim to all men the Word of God.

But St. Paul has told of the results, as he himself experienced them, when, at Athens, he publicly addressed the inhabitants of that world-renowned city. Some laughed in derision, some promised to listen at a future time, which never came for them; and the other Apostles, as they went their ways to the nations of the earth, too often met with the same discouraging results. Oh, how sad, my brethren, when we reflect that this deplorable indifference still characterizes the children of Adam, even after the Gospel has been preached, and the Church spread over the whole earth, and its holiness proved by the most wonderful effects and astonishing miracles.

Even to-day, and in this so-called age of enlightenment and culture, in this our nineteenth century, how fearfully indifferent are not men to the truths which the Word of God teaches, about their spiritual duties, their ultimate destination, and the momentous affair of their eternal salvation! This inattention and indifference is so much the more surprising because it presents such a striking contrast to the manner in which men generally act when they are told of something

which, by performing certain duties, or fulfilling certain conditions, they can gain, and by which they can greatly promote their temporal interests. Ah, yes! They eagerly hasten to that spot in some far-off land, where they are told that the bright gold lies buried deep in the soil, waiting only to enrich him who is so fortunate as to find it. They even brave the perils of the mighty deep, uncertain whether they will ever safely reach the shore. The same is true of honors and dignities. Observe the different aspirants to a throne; with what anxiety they watch the various political changes, fearing to lose the slightest chance of turning them to their advantage.

It is ever the same, beloved in Christ. Look at the sick. If they are told of some eminent physician or celebrated remedy, they will inquire into or send in quest of the same; they are all anxiety, and leave nothing undone to regain their health. The mechanic is ever on the alert to hear of new inventions; the merchant watches every opportunity to buy and sell to advantage; the man of wealth knows no rest, for, day and night, he is seeking to add to his store, or, hearing of a probable panic, he rushes to the spot where he can learn the truth, and try to avert the worst.

And, by means of God's Holy Word, man is told of the joys of heaven, the glory therein, and of the terrible and eternal torments which are prepared for sinners in hell. It penetrates the ears of the body, but the spiritual hearing is gone. The human race

goes recklessly on, living in a state of indifference as if wholly unconcerned for the future. Alas! Christians—Catholics—are no better, if they were only aware of it! They act as did the Jews, when St. Stephen preached to them: "They stopped their ears;" that is, they resolutely avoid attending service at those hours, when they would be reminded of their duties to God; or, when they are present, they attend not to the word of salvation, even if they hear it exteriorly. O folly! folly! To seek after the transitory joys and honors of earth in preference to listening to the Divine Word; to plunge, perhaps, into the vilest dissipations, rather than mortify their passions; to listen to the voice of the worldling or infidel, yet to close their hearts against the warning voice of God's minister, who seeks to win souls for Christ.

O Lord, preserve us from the evil of willful deafness of the soul; for, when it becomes chronic, all hope of salvation is over forever! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb; and they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him."—Mark 7, 32.

I CONSIDERED with you, most beloved in Christ, when the Gospel of this Sunday was read for you last year, the lamentable indifference of mankind in general to the sublime truths and terrible warnings of our holy faith and its Divine Founder,—and how, since the fall, man seems as though stricken with a spiritual deafness, which prevents him hearing the word of God!

And if he does hear it, he listens, as it were, against his will, not only paying no attention to what would show him the way to happiness; but going so far as to despise and deny it. We have also reflected upon the eagerness with which he seeks after all that he deems best for his temporal welfare, and the readiness with which he believes all that he hears on the subject. In truth, it would seem as if, in his corrupted state, he found more pleasure in falsehood than in truth! Far different from holy David, who cried out: "The wicked have told me fables; but not as Thy law. All Thy statutes are truth, and therefore a light to guide my feet to heaven!"

If this strike you, as it surely must, as a miserable condition, scarcely less so is the state of those Christians who hear and believe, but live, notwithstanding,

such lukewarm and tepid lives, as to give the impression that they care nothing for what they hear and believe.

But neither of these classes of deaf-mutes need despair of being healed; for there are ample means to effect their restoration, and these, with the Divine assistance, I will point out to you to-day.

O Mary, spouse of the Holy Ghost, obtain for us, from that Spirit of Love, a perfect willingness to hear and obey the voice of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Last year I also dwelt on the pitiable, and, indeed, most culpable, state into which this indifference to hearing that Divine voice has cast the human race. As it existed in ages past, it prevails at the present time, a truth which was brought particularly home to me, when, recently, I was explaining to a Protestant, who was extremely obstinate in her own opinion, that there is but one Church, *one* true Church, and how it could be no other than that which has existed for over eighteen hundred years—that was founded by Christ when He lived among men. In the very beginning this Protestant assured me that, say what I might, she would not be convinced; that she would retain the form of belief she had always professed, even though she knew that every word of my argument would be true!

While I spoke, the lady allowed her gaze to wan-

der constantly, as if to assure me of her inattention, as well as to banish from her mind every thought that might have touched her heart or shown her the truth.

When, in conclusion, I asked her: "Now, what do you say? Am I not right?" she replied, with the utmost indifference: "It may be that you are; I was not listening to you; for I intend to remain what I am."

I once met a soldier, dying in an hospital in Galicia, and endeavored to lead him to believe in and embrace our holy faith. In the very face of death, his reply was: "It is useless, priest; even if God Himself were to stand before me, with the terrible assurance that if I refused to become a Catholic I would this very day be plunged into the abyss of hell; rather would I go to perdition than become a member of the faith you profess!"

But praise and thanks to our merciful Lord, all heretics and infidels do not so willfully harden their hearts against the truth! But still the spiritual deafness, so universally prevailing, is most deplorable.

What is equally, if not more lamentable, is, that even among the children of the true Church, there exists a tepidity and indifference, which is alike sad, and astonishing. I include also those Catholics who certainly hear and believe the word of God; but seem content that their days should pass on in this spirit of tepidity, perfectly indifferent about leading a holy life, but content if they barely fulfill their religious

duties. They strive not after Christian perfection; neither do they hunger and thirst after justice!

This indifference, when displayed by those who have not heard the Divine Word, and who, therefore, neither believe nor concern themselves about it, is somewhat to be wondered at; but how difficult it is to comprehend that a Christian, who really believes the Divine truths of faith, and what they inculcate about our salvation, the imitation of Christ and His saints, and that eternity which most certainly awaits us—who admits that there is a judgment he can not escape, a purgatory which perhaps holds those he has given bad example, a heaven and hell to reward or to punish—who, in fine, would be willing to give up every thing, even life itself, for his faith, can yet remain wholly absorbed in the interests of earth, making but little preparation for death!

But as I said, there is a remedy for this insensibility, this spiritual deafness. We shall find this remedy if we reflect on the manner in which Christ cured the deaf-mute of to-day's Gospel.

He took him aside. What is signified by this? Our Lord wished to show that the principal cause of spiritual deafness, and moral indifference, is found in the influence which the example of, and intercourse with others exert upon the lives of those afflicted therewith. Jews and heathens, heretics and infidels, reproduce in their thoughts, and imitate in their actions, whatever they see and hear! The same is true of indifferent and lukewarm Christians. They verify the

adage: "Show me your company, and I will tell you what you are!"

Therefore, that your spiritual deafness may be healed, you must not live with the crowd, nor follow the crowd, but retire and meditate earnestly and often, for with justice has the Prophet Jeremias declared: "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in his heart." The world is filled with wickedness, infidelity, want of faith, impiety and indifference to supernatural things, because "no one thinketh in the heart." O Christian, retire into yourself, examine your own heart, listen to the word of God, understand it, and it will exercise a most decisive influence upon your life!

Christ put His finger into the ears of the deaf and dumb man. What signifies this? It admonishes us, that if we take an interest in the conversion of sinners to a holy life, or of heretics to the one true faith, we should not make use of lengthy arguments and abstruse explanations to lead them to the path of right and truth; for plain reasons, based on admitted truths, and confirmed by experience, have most weight.

For heretics and infidels, the consideration of the following truths would be most beneficial: There is but one God and Creator; as a rational being, I am immortal; therefore, between God and me there exists a relation which is called *Religion*, and which is founded upon the revelation of God to man, since reason alone, and of itself, is not explicit concerning the consequences of that relationship. Christ was the first teacher of this

divinely revealed religion, and after Him, by His own appointment, the Apostles and their successors—the bishops and priests of the Church. This Church, founded by Him, is the Catholic Church, which is therefore the only true one, and, the only one in which salvation can be found. If those who are separated from the fold of Christ, either by infidelity or some perverted form of religion, show themselves inclined to enter her fold, it is unwise to lose time in lengthy discussions; but go to meet them, rather, with outstretched arms. Show them the truth in all its sublimity, and pray earnestly to God that He may bless your efforts for Christ's dear sake.

The same means should be adopted with great sinners, whom some faithful child of the Church wishes to lead gently to God. They should be urged to consider the great contrast between their mode of life and their faith, and the imminent danger to which they expose their eternal salvation if they refuse to live consistently with their belief.

"And spitting, Christ touched His tongue." The spittle signifies the littleness of all the frail and fleeting goods of earth, and of the empty pleasures of this mortal life.

The exaggerated estimate of earthly riches and enjoyments is precisely what stands in the way of a true conversion to a zealous and pious life—a life in perfect accord with the teachings of holy faith.

Christ looked up to heaven and prayed. This admonishes us to direct our thoughts to heaven, and to

excite in our hearts the desire for that happy home. It should also strengthen us to labor with the greatest zeal in the service of God,—to deem no effort too great to do His holy will.

We should implore God to have mercy on us, and bring us at last to eternal bliss! If we act thus, we will hear the word of God, *such as it is.* We will live according to its precepts, rendering to God honor for time and eternity, through Jesus Christ our Lord!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And the string of his tongue was loosed; and he spoke right."—Mark 7, 35.

THE afflicted man, of whom we read in this day's Gospel that he was made whole, suffered from a twofold evil: he was afflicted with deafness, and in consequence lost the power of speech. But when the deafness disappeared under the ministrations of the Son of God, he spoke, and "spoke right." We can here make not only a close but a most important application of this man's double infirmity and of his cure to the spiritual condition of humanity, considered both as a body and individually, and to the remedy that is required by their state.

We have already considered how prone human nature is to turn a deaf ear when the Word of God is announced, and lamented the astonishing indifference to the truths of holy faith which prevails in our day. Those who have the happiness of belonging to the one true Church may be counted by millions; but a large proportion of them pay no regard to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and, instead of being an honor, they are at once a scandal and a grief to her. Thus, such Christians not only remain deaf but become dumb also, and speak not when and where, and as they should.

Christ first healed the deafness of the afflicted man —"faith comes from hearing"—then He loosened the

string of his tongue, whereupon he spoke, and "spoke right."

Let us consider what this dumbness typifies in regard to the human race—first as a body, then individually—ascertaining thus the meaning of the words: "And he spoke right."

O Mary, who, having heard and believed, didst entone that sublime canticle before the Lord on Judea's heights, teach us, thy children, ever to speak when we should, and in the manner most pleasing to God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

The votaries of the world care neither for God nor for their own salvation. They receive the Word of God exteriorly, and seem to listen to it, but heeding it not they remain spiritually deaf; and it is a fact, that heretics and schismatics, Pagans and Jews, Protestants and faithless Catholics, suffer alike from this deplorable evil.

Not less remarkable is the silence of man with regard to God! The world is dumb! From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, from the earliest dawn of day until the shades of night have fallen over the world, often from eventide until the midnight hour has tolled, what a ceaseless hum of conversation is heard over all the world. Every subject is discussed with never-flagging interest, save one, and

that is, *God*. What a profound silence is maintained upon that one theme, alike so terrible and so sweet.

"Lord, what wouldst Thou have me do?" should be the thought of every soul at earliest dawn; but few there are who ask the question even once, and yet our tongues should serve as means of praising God; daily and hourly should we praise and thank Him, pay Him our homage, and implore Him to bestow His grace upon us in the hour of need. And yet how many there are who allow the years to come and go, and utter not one prayer nor word of praise to Him! They are dumb.

And it is not that they are wanting in ideas or words. They can speak of whatever is grand, beautiful, and sublime in the order of creation, which they see and admire. They are eloquent in their praise of the great progress in science, the works of the learned, and are proud of knowing the authors. They delight in having read the most famous books, deeming it necessary to at least *pretend* to a classical education. They must see and converse upon the noted productions of art, and know the names of the artists to admire or condemn as they wish. They make the tour of the world, extol the beauties of nature, even explore the mysteries of the firmament, and call the stars by name. They dispute about the astronomer who discovered them first, and pretend to have arrived at a knowledge of the fundamental laws of nature.

They extol the goodness of men, their generosity and heroism, their benignity, prudence, and ability.

They speak of prominent politicians, of the royal and great personages of this world; they forget not relations and friends, especially if their position be good; they recall with love and gratitude those benefactors to whom they owe much. But on one subject they are silent. There is a silence, death-like and inexplicable, in regard to that God in Whom are embodied the most admirable attributes—infinite holiness, goodness, and majesty. He it is Who is the first great cause, not only of all the grandeur and magnificence in nature, of which men are so loud in their praise, but of all the wondrous achievements of mankind,—for who, but the Creator, bestowed on the work of His hands those powers which render man great?

One discovers a new force in nature, and is lauded by the whole world; yet he only accidentally came to its knowledge; not he, but God, laid it in nature's bosom. About *Him*, the author of all power, not a word is heard.

There is a man who has made the tour of the world, and sent forth a volume on the wonders he saw, the glories of the firmament, and the beauties which render this earth so fair. His description is brilliant, his book is much sought after, but not one of its pages pays tribute to the Creator of heaven and earth; not one word is found therein in praise of the Lord. Nay, search from beginning to end, and, perhaps, you will fail to find even His name.

In the same way does the world remain dumb about the propagation of God's kingdom on earth. Admin-

istrators of public affairs deem themselves wonderfully wise in proclaiming aloud: "Believe what you wish, act as you think best with regard to God and religion, keep the commandments of God if you please or keep them not; but woe unto you if you violate a law of the State." And, my brethren, at all legislative or political assemblies where the most able men of the State come together to deliberate or make laws, where debates and discussions are the order of the day, not only is there not one word spoken about God, but were His most holy name to be mentioned, surprise, or even disdain, would be read in the expression of all. This class of men may well be called deaf and dumb with regard to their duties towards their Creator.

In how many families do we not find one or more suffering from these spiritual evils! They are both deaf and dumb when there is question of fulfilling what is commanded by the Church. How many parents are thus afflicted? Deaf and dumb! Poor parents, who care not, as they should, to know and fulfill the divine will; who do not provide books for their children which will foster in their youthful minds a love of piety, and a longing after all that is good!

Perhaps, through their fault, those children will remain also through life deaf and dumb. Poor children! Allowed to grow up with scarce any instruction about God, or the means of attaining eternal bliss, they hear naught of His holy name except when it is profaned. Their parents are silent! They see the children who

have been given them by God walking on the road to perdition, urged on, perhaps, by their evil example, yet they are dumb! Nay, perhaps they even say, "they are old enough to act as they please;" or, "what else can one expect from their youth? By and by they will do better!"

It may be a wife, it may be a husband, who is afflicted. Growing careless in the discharge of every religious duty, the erring party pursues the downward path, without a word of remonstrance from the other, whose duty it is to speak, but who is dumb. There is a couple who have contracted a mixed marriage. The Catholic husband or wife, as the case may be, makes not the slightest effort to sanctify the unbelieving partner, but remains willfully and culpably silent. Perhaps the heart of that unconverted one is ready to receive the Word of God, and to be at once a consolation and a joy to the sacred Heart of our Lord, but for that criminal silence, that terrible spiritual dumbness!

Or, perhaps, alas! most beloved in Christ, when the greater number of Christians,—*Catholics*,—whom the loving Saviour invites to be models for the rest of the world, do open their lips, it may be that they do not speak right, that they injure rather than promote the interests of God's kingdom on earth, because their discourse is a curse, their conversation an oath.

It may be that they advocate the cause of the wicked; it may be that, forgetting the faith of their fathers, and faithless to all that it enjoins, they go even so far as to profess infidelity; that they boast of

their hatred to others, and the revenge they will take, or project new methods of offending a God Who will not be mocked. They do not speak right.

Therefore, O Lord! open for thy faithless children the ears of their souls that they may hear Thy Word, and, doing it, open their lips only to declare Thy praise! Amen!

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him; and having wounded him went away leaving him half dead."—Luke 10.

TO-DAY'S Gospel presents to our consideration the sad condition of a man who has had the misfortune to lose the precious boon of saving grace by yielding to temptation, and falling into mortal sin.

But, at the same time, it points to the great fortune that becomes ours, as children of the true Church, through the grace—the effects of the Sacrament of Penance—which Christ left His Church for the salvation and restoration of those who, robbed and wounded by sin, cast themselves repentantly into the arms of God's infinite mercy.

Hence, this authority to forgive sin is the most important power and grace Christ left His Church for the salvation of the sinful human race. But, unhappily, all who apparently receive this Sacrament do not really receive absolution; for there are many whose heart is not in that disposition necessary for the forgiveness of sin. The first and most important condition is abhorrence of sin, and a thorough appreciation of the misfortune into which sin has precipitated us.

The greater this abhorrence is, the deeper our grief, the more thorough and effective will be our repentance, the more sincere our resolution to avoid all sin in future, and our faithfulness in keeping this resolution.

To-day's Gospel, by what it tells us of the robbed and wounded traveler, is especially qualified to awaken and increase within us this disposition of heart.

O Mary, thou refuge of sinners, full of grace, pray for us, that God may give us the light to recognize fully the evil of sin, and to avoid it for evermore!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

If the sinner really desires to receive, through the Sacrament of Penance, absolution, and to be sanctified and saved, then it is his duty to repent of his sin sincerely, and to make the firm resolution never to offend God again.

The consideration of the benefits of which sin robs us, and the wounds it deals us, will especially incline our hearts to repent thus. The robbed and wounded traveler of Jericho reminds us of this, and places this sad state of the soul figuratively before our eyes.

The man attacked by robbers lies upon the ground stripped of his garments. What are these garments, morally and spiritually considered, in connection with the state of a sinner?

I reply: Sin deprives him of that inexpressibly great good, the garment of sanctifying grace. To obtain

a faint conception of the value of this benefit, we need only consider the connection in which we stand, as man, to God, and to the approaching eternity.

I say: We are, it is true, as reasonable beings already the image of God—since God is a Spirit, and the soul is also a spirit; but this nobility of the soul—this God-like nature—does not entitle us to that supernatural destination by which we are permitted to see and to possess God.

This good fortune does not fall to the lot of man until after the bestowal of sanctifying grace, a fact to which the book of Genesis refers in testifying that God created man, not only to His own image, but also to His *likeness*. It is by sanctifying grace that we become the kindred of God; become like Him, as children are like their father.

No mind of man can divine the splendor, the beauty, which sanctifying grace pours out over the soul. It is when in this state that man receives the right to call God, not only his Lord, but also his "Father." It is, further, in this state that man enters into the communion of the angels and saints, and in heaven shares for evermore their joy, their bliss, and their merits and glorification.

Man is then in that happy state which enables him, with the aid of actual grace, to raise himself, with every breath, higher and higher in the joys of heaven, and to place always purer and more beautiful jewels in the crown of his merits. In the same measure in which the light of sanctifying grace is communicated

to the soul here upon earth, so one day the light of glory will be communicated when the soul leaves earth to go to God, to see, to know, to love Him, and to partake of His infinite glory.

Man, when in this state of grace, may consider himself as a fellow-citizen of the angels in the heavenly Jerusalem; he may greet all saints as brothers and sisters; may call the Blessed Virgin, Mother; and Jesus, as man, nay, even God, his Brother—a prerogative which is not even granted to the angels!

How great a possession is sanctifying grace! It is represented in the Apocalypse as the magnificent garment which clothes the saints in splendor.

But, behold! one single mortal sin robs man of this precious, magnificent garment of his soul; robs him suddenly of all his merits, all his claims to the kingdom of glory; for there is no communion between light and darkness, between God and sin, between Christ and Belial!

Christ says: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." He also, together with all his fallen comrades, had come into existence in this state of sanctifying grace. It was sin, and that only committed in thought, that took this good from him and all the angels, changing them from beautiful inhabitants of heaven into horrible demons, and cast them from their high places into the abyss of hell! They are lost forever!

The same miserable condition befalls the soul that, after being clothed in the heavenly vesture of sanctifying grace, has the misfortune to fall into mortal sin!

Heaven, the inheritance of glory and bliss in the communion of the saints is lost, man has no longer the right to consider himself the fellow-citizen of the angels and saints, to greet the Blessed Virgin as mother, Jesus as Brother and Saviour!

Lost are all the merits which he had earned until now; and, as long as he remains in this state, there is no possibility of his gaining merits for the life to come, even if he fast, give alms, and do all that appears worthy of praise.

Besides this, sin robs him of the peace of his soul, of the comfort a good conscience gives; of the joys, not only of those found in prayer, but of all those which the Catholic Church offers her children during the ecclesiastical year; of the consolation of a worthy reception of the Blessed Eucharist, and of the hope of heaven!

Sin also wounds the faculties of the soul. It injures the mind, the understanding, respecting things of salvation. It even conceals the greatness of the misery it occasions.

Sin wounds, enfeebles the will, and burdens it with the slavish chains of habit.

Sin wounds the memory by crowding it with sinful recollections, and deceptive imaginations.

Sin wounds heart and feeling in such a manner that all desire to lead a virtuous life slowly dies.

Sinner, in order that you may repent and confess worthily, consider how sin has robbed you, and how it has inflicted deadly wounds upon you! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Go, and do thou in like manner."—Luke 10.

THE good Samaritan took the robbed and wounded traveler to an inn and cared for him.

This parable points out the state of a sinner wounded by sin, and also of his cure and recovery through the Sacrament of Penance which Christ left His Church.

The importance of this Sacrament, and the favor God bestowed upon us in its institution, is especially manifest from the circumstance that the Apostle does not mention in the Creed any other power or gift left by Christ to His Church than this one: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,—*in the forgiveness of sin.*"

Christ came into the world to save sinners, and founded His Church that He might bestow upon her the infinite merits of the redemption, in order that all the children of man, who are of a good and believing mind, may draw from it grace and salvation until the end of time. Our part in the economy of this Sacrament is, that we receive it frequently and rightly; we can not, therefore, be reminded too often or too emphatically of this duty.

Hence, I say to-day: Confess often, but confess rightly, and to the spiritual recovery of your soul.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, grant thy aid, that all

may rightly confess, and that thus they may be truly absolved from their sins!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God.

St. Augustine used to say: "He who prays well, lives well." We have the same right; yes, even more right to say: "He who confesses well, lives well."

Unfortunately, confession is not always what it should be. Were this not the case, how great a change the Church of God would experience, at least once a year, at Easter!

St. Teresa goes so far as to ask the question: "Why have there been and are there Catholics,—and God knows how many,—who will be lost for all eternity?" Is it because they sinned? "No;" answers the saint, "but because they have not rightly confessed."

And yet how easy would it be for all those children of the Church, who have sinned, to reconcile themselves to God, if they only fulfilled the few and easy conditions that are necessary for a worthy confession!

Every Christian, while yet but a child, is instructed in these conditions, and is able to enumerate them; and yet the confession of many, and even of some who confess often, is only a deception. But though they may succeed in deceiving the priest, they can not deceive God, Who sees into the heart.

I will prove my assertion more in detail.

The first condition necessary for a worthy confession is the *sincere desire to confess rightly*, and hence

the earnest cry of the heart to God: Enlighten me, O Lord! to recognize my guilt, strengthen me to confess rightly, to repent truly, and never again to offend Thee!

How many confess only from habit, and do not approach the Sacrament of Penance with the earnestness it requires. I am afraid of such confessions.

The second condition is *instruction;* namely, to be able, as a well-instructed Christian, to distinguish between what is sin and what is not; between a mortal and a venial sin. To draw this distinction with sufficient accuracy, it is necessary to be instructed in the Catechism.

Prayer-books, with aids for confession, in the form of examination of conscience, are not practical, because they are liable to fall into the hands of some one unacquainted with the vices enumerated therein, and who might be led by them into temptation.

What every one needs is *instruction* and examination of conscience, at least, in regard to all that is mortal sin in thoughts, words, desires, works, omissions, in regard to his own sins, and the sins of others as far as they are caused by him. So many omit a thorough examination of conscience, and hence so many unworthy confessions.

We go into the confessional and confess our sinful actions, but we have not examined and do not confess our thoughts; and yet many great sins are committed in thought!

We confess evil deeds, but as we have not examined

ourselves in regard to our wishes, we do not confess our sinful desires. And yet, men frequently commit greater sin in desire than in deed, because they have not the opportunity to do what they sinfully desire. Such confessions are deceptions.

We confess our evil actions, but we do not examine ourselves in regard to our obligations, and hence do not confess our sins of omission.

Only God knows how many confessions of parents, especially of mothers,—for they go oftener to confession than their husbands,—are useless, because they have sinned greatly by omitting to force their children to say those prayers which are of obligation for all; by not instructing them in their faith; by not preparing them soon enough for Holy Communion; by not watching their intercourse with others; by not punishing their misdeeds; by not guiding them properly in the selection of their vocation; especially, by not advising them, as they are in duty bound, when they wish to marry.

We confess, but we do not explain our sin; we do not state those circumstances which change the nature of the sin committed.

We say for instance: I have sinned against the sixth commandment; but, having not examined ourselves, we do not say whether we led others or were led by them into the path of evil. Such confessions are unworthy.

We confess, but we do not mention the number of times the sin was committed, as is necessary in regard to mortal sin.

But what still oftener renders confession a decep-

tion is the absence of that repentance which we should feel, considering that we have offended God, and that we have wickedly exposed ourselves to the terrible, the eternal consequences of sin.

The most efficacious means to awaken in us, by faith and love, a true, supernatural repentance, is to look upon Jesus, the crucified Saviour, and upon Magdalen at the foot of the cross, upon the anguish she felt when she saw how her Lord suffered, when she looked at His wounds, and the blood which fell upon her from the cross!

Lastly, there is frequently not sufficient care to reanimate our faith while approaching the Sacrament of Penance, and also great negligence in making the firm *resolution* to avoid sin and every occasion leading to it, and thus we show that our repentance is not true and supernatural.

How many who confess, do not confess worthily! And why? They conceal mortal sins!

They are ashamed. And yet, how easy it were for them to be candid, had they but faith, and did they but consider that the confessor is not there to represent the severe judge but the good Samaritan, who feels consoled to see that his care for the poor wounded sinner is not in vain, but that, with the help of the Almighty he can restore him!

Would to God that every sinner appreciated the care and solicitude the priest and confessor has for his soul!

The good Samaritan in the Gospel lovingly placed

the robbed and wounded traveler upon his own beast and took him to an inn.

Unfortunately, a confessor has the greatest trouble and anxiety to encourage, question and assist the sinner in order that he may confess frankly, thoroughly and repentantly, but he does it willingly, and pours wine and oil into the wounds of the sinner's heart by his impressive and consoling exhortations.

Sinner, trust yourself to the priest, and your wounds will be healed!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"I, at my return, will repay thee."—Luke 10.

A FAITHFUL soul, reading to-day's Gospel, will be involuntarily reminded that man, precipitated by sin into the depth of misery, finds help through Christ, the Good Samaritan, if he himself does not place obstacles in the way.

We call this benefit of our reconciliation to God, this power of the Church in regard to the dispensation of the Sacrament of Penance, rightly the greatest benefit which man, as Christian, as sinner, owes to God; but it is necessary that man, on his side, cooperate, that he fulfill all the given conditions, in order to receive the Sacrament of Penance effectually, and to render his confession beneficial.

But it should not rest there. He ought to do all in his power to confess frequently, and gain that grace which God has bestowed upon His Church for those who approach the Sacrament of Penance worthily.

In regard to this, it is well to consider the shallowness of all the excuses usually brought forward by all lukewarm Christians, when they are exhorted to go more frequently to confession.

This shall be the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, mother of grace, pray for us, thy children, that by the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance we may always draw

more divine grace from the fountain of the wounds of Christ!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater glory of God!

Why should I go so often to confession? This is generally the first question uttered by the lukewarm Christians, when they are invited and exhorted to confess frequently.

I answer: Confess often in order to do it well, for that which we do often and earnestly we learn to do easily, well, and with assurance. Hence, men who always do the same work, do it generally quickly and properly. This will become clearer and more intelligible to us, if we place the conditions for making a worthy confession before our eyes in the order in which they follow.

The first of these conditions is: *humility* of heart—the cry of the soul to God: Lord, help; otherwise I am powerless! enlighten me! strengthen me!

Men who go but seldom to confession are not so thoroughly impressed with the greatness of their weakness as those who confess often, and yet fall again and again into errors and faults, and hence clearly see and understand their littleness. These are further humiliated at not seeing their imperfections as the saints did; hence their cry to God: Lord, enlighten me! strengthen me! have mercy on me!

It is entirely different with those who rarely go to confession. They think and say to themselves: I am

good enough, by far not as bad as many others; why should I go so often to confession?

The second condition is the clear *knowledge* of one's self as far as this lies in our power.

One who seldom looks around a room does not notice the dust that collects there. Men who go but seldom to confession also examine but seldom their conscience with the earnestness those do who confess often. Their conscience is like the wall which the spirit of the prophet Ezechiel saw when he heard God's call: "Strike it! What dost thou see? Nothing. Strike again! Another portion of the wall falls. What dost thou see? Nothing. Strike again! The wall falls. What dost thou see? The abomination of abominations, O Lord!" It is the same with confession. Just those who but rarely enter the confessional seem to have the least to say. Their excuse is: Why should I confess so frequently? I do nothing bad. But no sooner does the confessor commence to question, than every question seems a renewed stroke at the falling wall, and how often so much appears that is horrible, so much corruption, that confessor and penitent exclaim to themselves: "Abomination of abominations!"

But, even, if going but seldom to confession you yet do not commit a mortal sin, you have, nevertheless, no right to ask: Why should I go more frequently to confession, when I do not commit mortal sin? For whoever thus excuses himself—and how many do it!—is not correctly instructed in regard

to the nature and effect of the Sacrament of Penance.

The Sacrament of Penance has, namely, a twofold power and effect. If one or more mortal sins have extinguished the light of saving grace in a soul, then a worthy confession renews this light in the cleansed soul, and with the pardoned sin the darkness that filled it vanishes. In case, however, that no mortal sin has extinguished the light of divine grace in our soul, the absolution increases the light and measure of saving grace within us, and in the same degree the light of glory in heaven for the soul sanctified by confession.

How great a gain!

For instance: Two men, lying upon a sick bed, confess. If, shortly after, they both die, and their merits were equal, they would be placed equally high in heaven. If, however, on the priest returning the following day, one of them still survived, and received once more absolution, then he would be raised as high above the other in the glories of heaven as the stars are above the earth. How can one then ask: "Why should I go so often to confession?" Is not confession the most spendid opportunity to heighten the glory awaiting us in heaven by the increase of sanctifying grace? and is it not the desire of all men, artisans as well as merchants, to earn daily more and more?

Add to this that we have but one life to live, and that after this life we have never again an opportunity of drawing from this fountain of merits for heaven. Hence

the foolishness of the question: "Why should I go more frequently to confession?"

You will repent it in eternity, but then it will be too late. Therefore, lose no time, and confess as often as you can. There have been saints who have confessed daily.

Some Christians say, also: Of what avail is frequent confession? we still sin. I answer: Yes, we sin; but, when we confess frequently and seriously, then we do not have mortal sin to confess, or, at any rate, not so many or so great ones as formerly. We then have only venial sin to confess; and, if we continue to confess with the same zeal, God will give us the grace to become more and more cleansed from them. Try it, and you yourself will experience the truth of this assertion.

The absurdity of this last excuse is proved by daily life. What would you say of a man who, thinking himself wiser than all others, said: To wash is useless; soon after we will need washing as much as before? and, consequently, ceased not only to wash himself, but to cut his nails or comb his hair, and never cleaned his room, always saying: It does no good. Such a man would be considered a fool, and deserve to be treated as such.

Not less foolish are those who make other similar remarks about frequent confessions.

Lastly, does not confession lead us to the table of the Lord? And, hence, how dares a believing Christian ask: Wherefore frequent confessions? Is it not

Christ, the Lord Himself, Whom we receive in Holy Communion after confession?

Oh, how great a happiness, how great a gain, for time and eternity! Therefore, go often and worthily to confession! Amen!

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"There met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off."—Luke 17.

ST. AUGUSTINE and the other holy fathers remark, that the words of the Holy Gospel are not only instructive, but that the deeds, of which mention is made, have almost always a spiritual signification.

Christ Himself gave us a manifest illustration, when, after the abundant haul of fishes He told St. Peter: That He would make him a *fisher of men;* also when He caused the tree to wither, because it did not bear good fruit. The holy fathers behold in the leprosy, of which the Gospel speaks several times, an image of sin.

The reason for this comparison is very evident. There is a great deal of similarity between leprosy and sin which we should well consider.

Leprosy is one of those diseases which entirely disfigures the human body. It is at the same time a very contagious disease. This accounts for the precautions which the law of the Jews compelled them to take, in order to keep all those infected with leprosy at a distance from the others; on the other hand, we perceive the care and fear of those in health, not to come in contact with the diseased ones.

In the same manner, and still more frightfully, does *sin* disfigure the soul, and it is also very contagious. How just, therefore, is this warning: Avoid the company of sinners, especially of those sinners whose lives spread the infection by the bad example they give.

In this sermon, I will direct your attention to the kind of lepers you ought especially to avoid, lest the threat of Holy Scripture should be verified in you: With the wicked thou wilt become wicked.

O Mary, protect us in our intercourse with evil men, when it is not in our power to avoid them!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

Although the company of sinners, in general, is the source of many dangers, as Holy Scripture assures us, yet there is a certain class of sinners whose company is particularly injurious to us, and whom we have to shun as much as possible.

The Gospel of to-day speaks of ten lepers. And I will draw your attention to ten kinds of sinners with whom intercourse must be especially avoided.

To the first class of lepers, parents themselves but too often belong. They are those parents who do not carefully instruct their children in matters of religion, who do not urge them to prayer, who do not guide them in the path of virtue, and do not give them good example; but, on the contrary, give scandal to their own family by their bad example. They are those

parents who do not care for the practice of their religion, who are themselves not instructed in matters of faith, who do not pray, nor let their children pray; who, on the contrary, by cursing and swearing, teach their children even at an early age to do the same; those who eat meat on fast-days, neglect going to Mass on Sunday, do not receive Holy Communion for a number of years, ridicule the priests and the precepts of the Church in presence of their children; who encourage them by word and example to care only for the increase of their temporal possessions, to enjoy this life to its full extent; who, perhaps, by intemperance, immoral language, immodest dress, offensive demeanor, sow the seed of the vice of impurity into the hearts of their children.

Who can calculate the number of children, especially in America, that catch the leprous infection of sin from their parents, who are covered with it from head to foot!

Poor children!

And when it does occur that such a child approaches a priest in the Sacrament of Penance, what is more natural than that he should advise the child: Endeavor to leave your home as soon as possible?

Yes, there are actually such monsters of moral depravity, that we are obliged to exact from their adult children the promise to leave their parental roof, under pain of being refused absolution. Terrible!

To the second class of lepers belong children whose company can not be frequented by those of their own

age without danger of corruption. Familiar intercourse with brother or sister may become an occasion of sin. And the same is to be said of neighbors' children and school-mates. What pest-houses of leprous children the public schools are, in many instances! and what an account will parents have to render, if, without further inquiry into the state of such schools, they send their children to them!

To the third class of lepers belong those with whom, sooner or later social relations, bring us into contact as so-called friends, comrades, partners, associates in business, who lead a sinful life.

Fourthly, the old proverb is often verified: "Tell me your company, and I will tell you who you are." And in this respect, we ought especially to avoid the following scandal-giving sinners, namely: Willful infidels or heretics, willful contemners of the religion of Christ—those who, although baptized and raised as Catholics, do not fulfill the duties of their holy religion, and encourage others, by word or example, to imitate them. To this class belong those who do not hear Mass on Sunday, never attend divine service; but, on the contrary, spend the Lord's day in idleness, in visiting alehouses, in going out hunting, or in some diversion or other. Avoid all these.

To the fifth class belong those of other denominations, who make it a point to tempt Catholics to attend prayer-meetings or Sunday-schools, or to send their children. Beware of these.

To the sixth class belong those who are addicted to

drink, and whose only thought is the gratification of their senses—who pass their nights at balls, theaters, picnics, and other places of amusement. Shun these persons, and also avoid the use of intoxicating liquors of every sort.

To the seventh class belong all those who do not make their Easter duties, even if in other respects they act like Catholics, and wish to be regarded as such. They are persons who, as a rule, care only for worldly treasures and enjoyments, and who stifle Catholic life in themselves and others.

To the eighth class belong those who are wont to remain alone with persons of the opposite sex. If you wish to preserve a pure heart, whoever you are, young man or young woman, heed the following admonition, and follow it inviolably as your rule of life:

Granted that your intention is to marry, still you are never allowed to hold clandestine intercourse with persons of the opposite sex; for, as Holy Scripture assures us: "It is putting fire and straw together." Yes, even if both parties are good and innocent, they can not allow themselves secret meetings, since these are always an occasion of sin. And grant that one does not feel any temptation whatever, still the other party may, and you will be held responsible. And when parties are already engaged, there is still more reason to urge them not to remain alone, so as not to give occasion for false suspicions and insinuations.

Finally, to the tenth, and by far the most dangerous class, belong all those who, by their words, dress, for-

wardness, or in any manner whatsoever are occasions of temptations against holy purity.

If you value your happiness and the salvation of your soul, shun such persons, and never allow yourself, under any condition, to remain near them, or to have any intercourse with them.

Flee! Only then will you conquer, and preserve your heart pure and free from the leprosy of sin! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Thy faith hath made thee whole."—Luke 5.

CHRIST performs the miracle and heals the leper, but He, at the same time, points to the power and effect of the true faith which animated him, and which caused him to turn to Jesus with such confidence. This circumstance proves to us what a precious gift and grace faith is.

But not every faith will save us; only the faith in Christ which is taught by that Church which He has founded, and to which He has confided the doctrines of belief, which she teaches her children with infallible certainty.

Not every faith would have cured the leper, and in the same manner not every faith will lead to salvation,—only that of the one true Church which Christ has founded eighteen hundred years ago, and which is the only saving Church.

I will take advantage of this opportunity to speak to you about the Catholic Church, as the only true, saving Church.

It is this dogma, in particular, which enkindles the anger and hatred of heretics against the Catholic Church; but it is also a dogma which very few Catholics are able to explain fully and satisfactorily to those of other denominations.

Pay attention to what I shall say to-day on this sub-

ject, and you will be enabled so to answer and refute every objection to this dogma, that every one who believes in Christ, and reflects a little, will be compelled to agree with you.

O Mary, patroness of the Church, pray for all men, that they may acknowledge the truth of the Catholic Church, and, joining her, may be saved!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

The Catholic Church is the only saving Church. This is a dogma, and every one who calls himself a Catholic is obliged to profess this article of faith. Still, some persons are saved, without ever having heard one word of the Catholic Church, and, what may seem stranger still, they are saved as members of the Catholic Church!

This seems to be a contradiction, and yet it is not. I say that the Catholic Church is the only saving Church, and this must be clear to every one who, as a Christian, believes in Christ. It is only necessary to consider the facts and promises of our Lord. With these before his mind he can no more deny our assertion, than a person with eyes can refuse to admit the existence of the sun when it pours down its rays from a cloudless sky at midday!

Christ says, emphatically: "He who does not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican;" and again: "He that believeth not, shall

be condemned." He that believeth not—what? That which the Church proposes to our belief, by the mouth of him whom Christ has made the rock of His Church, and for whose faith he has prayed, that it might not fail;—the doctrine taught by the Church, which is founded upon Peter, and of which Christ says: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" and, "I will remain with you until the consummation of ages." It is that faith which the ordained priests of the Church, in accordance with their teaching office, announce to the people—the priests to whom these words of our Lord refer: "He that heareth you, heareth me."

If men could be saved outside of the true faith,—what necessity was there for Christ to come into the world and teach this faith? Why did He send His Apostles all over the world to announce the true faith, thereby teaching the children of men what God expected them to do in order to be saved? If Jews and heathens could be saved without Him, of what use was the mission of the Apostles,—the establishment of a Church? All these people had a religion of some kind.

If we can be saved in any religion, then all religions are one and the same. Well, then, why has Christ come? But the fallen race of men was in need of a Redeemer and a Teacher; and this Saviour and Guide is Christ. He calls Himself the way, and there is none other that leads to salvation but the one which Christ trod before us, and which He teaches us through His Church.

The Apostles thus understood the words of Christ;

for on Pentecost Sunday, St. Peter addressed the executioners of Christ: "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved, than the name of Jesus,"—and that in the Church which celebrates the anniversary of its birth on Pentecost Sunday—which is the Catholic Church.

St. Peter and the holy fathers compare the Church to the ark; all who were not within it, perished in the flood.

But here arises the question: Is it, that all who have not been Catholics, are damned? I answer, No; but still they are saved, only if they departed this life as children of the Catholic Church. How must this be understood? Be attentive, and you will easily comprehend it, and be able to explain it to others. I affirm:

There is certainly but one true Church of Christ, and this is the Catholic Church, and only she is the true divinely-instituted Church; and, therefore, the only saving Church. But there are three different ways in which we are made members of this Church. We become children of the Catholic Church by valid baptism, and the grace of baptism may be communicated in three ways: there is a baptism of water, a baptism of blood, and a baptism of desire!

As regards the baptism of water few words are necessary; it is the means through which the grace of baptism is generally communicated.

And what grace is this grace of baptism? I reply: It is the primitive imparting of sanctifying grace, by

means of which we become children of God, and by which, if we preserve it, we are made heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

The baptism of blood is received, when a person, who can not receive the baptism of water, sheds his blood for the holy faith, as was often the case with the martyrs of ancient times. The Catholic faith teaches that, in such a case, the martyr receives sanctifying grace, by his blood, the same as if he had been cleansed by the baptism of water.

But with regard to persons who have never had an opportunity of convincing themselves of the truth of the Catholic Church, we must distinguish between two certain classes of men: Those, in the first place, who are born among Protestants and heretics, but who have heard of Christ and His Church; and, secondly, those who, being born among heathens, have never learned a word concerning the Redeemer and His Church.

In regard to the first class, there are millions born among Protestants, who were validly baptized; and all of these are, in the sight of God, Catholics from their early childhood, and will live and die as Catholics, unless, in later years, they voluntarily embrace the errors of heresy. Therefore, if they die without having committed a mortal sin, or have elicited true contrition for their sins, although they are buried as Protestants in the eyes of the world, yet, in reality, they have been Catholics before God, and as children of the Catholic Church they will be saved.

But as regards those who live among heathens, and never hear a word of Christ, have never seen a priest; or who, being raised among Protestants, and have never been baptized, whether such will be saved, depends on their manner of living, and the state of their heart in the sight of God.

If these heathens and heretics serve God with their whole heart, and lead a good moral life,—and if, before God, they desire and would be at any time prepared, should opportunity offer, to embrace the Catholic faith; of such persons the Catholic Church teaches, that they receive sanctifying grace directly from God, without the ministration of men, and in this extraordinary manner, by the baptism of desire, they belong to the soul of the Catholic Church.

There is a remarkable instance of this kind recorded in Scripture, namely, in the case of the captain Cornelius and his family. God had already imparted His grace to them, through the Holy Ghost, before they had, as yet, heard any thing about Christ, by the sermons of Peter. In consequence of this, St. Thomas, of Aquin, remarked: God would rather send an angel from heaven to enlighten a soul, than allow it to perish without any fault of its own.

But woe to those who could have convinced themselves of the truth of the Catholic Church, but who, through carelessness, stubbornness, or human respect, have failed to enter her communion! They certainly will lose their claim to heaven. But we will not judge or condemn them; Christ is their Judge!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Go; thy faith hath made thee whole."—Luke 17.

WHAT a treasure is the gift of holy faith! No doubt it is the greatest blessing which God, the Creator, has bestowed upon man, both for time and eternity. For in what darkness of spirit lives the man without faith! how weak is he in the practice of virtue! how feeble in the combat against the world, the flesh, and the devil! And, on the other hand, how brilliant the light which the sun of faith sheds upon man's path! for revelation gives him definite and satisfactory information about God, about the world—its creation, its destiny, and all that concerns us as human beings.

It is faith which clearly explains moral evil in this world, and likewise the origin and cause of all the tribulations and adversities with which we are obliged to contend during our brief and much-troubled life. And it is faith, again, which teaches us how God, in His infinite mercy, has sent us salvation through Jesus Christ.

But it is not mere faith which will save us; it is not because we professed the belief of the Catholic Church; but because we have lived according to our faith, and have performed our duties in the manner which our faith prescribes, that we shall be saved. In other words:

If we, as children of the one saving Church, really wish to be saved, the words of St. Paul must be verified in us: "The just man lives by faith."

Let us to-day consider how this assertion of the Apostle is to be understood.

O Mary, thou who hast believed, and whose life has been such a glorious testimony of the faith which animated thee, bless us, that we may follow thy example, and live according to our faith!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

I said, that the greatest blessing which the Lord has conferred upon us, and for which we can never be sufficiently grateful, is the happiness of being children of the one true Church. This is apparent from what I have remarked in the introduction, regarding the light which she imparts concerning our existence and our destiny; and because she offers us also the means to advance in the way of salvation.

This grace appears the more important and precious when we remember that, until the present time, so large a portion of mankind were deprived of it.

It is, therefore, our most sacred duty to prove our gratitude by making a proper use of the gift of faith; that, after having fought and conquered, as true children of the Church militant, we may, for all eternity, share the joy and glory of the victory with the Church triumphant.

And the better to appreciate the happiness of being called to the true, and therefore only saving Church, let us first consider the many nations that have lived in this world before the advent of Christ. The Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, under whose sway the world once trembled, were all denied the blessing to be children of the true Church.

Then, since the advent of Christ on this earth, how many millions of heathens have lived during these two thousand years that have almost passed, and how many are still living upon earth!

Furthermore, what a number of infidels, heretics, schismatics, Jews and Turks have, since the time of Christ, languished in the darkness of error! What would be our fate for all eternity if God had permitted us to be born in heathen lands, or to spend our lives among infidels?

Our Lord has chosen us to be the children of His Church, without any merit of our own. What an inducement for us to thank God, and, by our lives, to prove the sincerity of our gratitude!

What our duties are in this respect, and what God demands of us, is, that by our lives we give testimony of the truth and sanctity of our faith.

If that were not the case, what would it avail us to be Catholics? Does not Christ Himself affirm, that of him "to whom much has been given, much shall be required?" And again: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin."

St. James reminds us of our duties by still more forcible language. He says: "Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

As to the qualities which should characterize our faith, in order that we may be saved by it, I will say: Our faith, in the first place, must be complete, which means not only that we believe all revealed truth without the admission of a willful doubt; but, moreover, that we be instructed, as well as possible, in matters of faith, so that all its doctrines may be a source of enlightenment, encouragement, and consolation for us, and we may be thus enabled, when questioned by non-Catholics, to give an explanation of all the truths which our holy faith teaches, as the Christians were able to do in the time of the Apostles, and in the first centuries of Christianity.

This does not imply that we may be satisfied with the mere knowledge of the doctrines of faith,—with learning them by heart, so as to fit ourselves for the reception of the Holy Sacraments; but it signifies, moreover, that we must embrace every opportunity, and do our utmost to instruct others in the truths of our holy faith, and thus to bring them also to a knowledge of the same. But how small is the number of the Christians that do this! Many who call themselves Catholics are only superficially instructed in the doctrines of their Church, and hence can not do this. For this reason, every one should seek the company of the well-in-

structed, and also accept the assistance which is offered him by the numerous books and pamphlets published for this purpose.

In the second place, ours must be a faith which *enlightens;* that is to say, not a faith in the letter of revelation; but one whose light clearly indicates the way of salvation, and which enables us to discern the particular state to which God has called us, and the means which He has given us, according to our vocation, that as children of God, we may serve Him and be made happy.

It must, likewise, be a *living* faith, an *active* faith, replete with the love of God and our neighbor.

The first thing necessary in this respect, and which will prove that our faith is active, is, that the considerations of the truths of our holy faith incite us to use all means to preserve our souls free from the leprosy of sin. If all sins and vices, even when viewed in the light of reason, seem so detestable, how much more when we regard the capital sins of pride, covetousness, anger, envy, enmity, dissension, gluttony and lust, in the light of faith; and when we consider how much our Lord has suffered for us, to save us from the evil of sin, and regard the means He has left us for this purpose, in His Church, by the institution of the Sacraments! Who does not see from this, how abominable is sin in a child of the Church contemning all this, and how great therefore will be the extent of the punishment which awaits him in eternity?

That our faith may lead us to salvation, it must also

be a *sanctifying* faith; first, as regards ourselves, that it urge us to follow in the footsteps of Christ and his saints, by the zealous practice of Christian virtues, for which the Church has provided us with so many and so efficacious means. But it must also be sanctifying with regard to others, in compliance with the advice of Christ: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in heaven,"—that they may be induced to profess the true faith, and to live according to it.

Finally, our faith must be firm and constant, that we may ever be prepared to sacrifice all, even life itself, in defense of our belief.

Examine, question yourself, whether these are the qualities of your faith. Are you thoroughly instructed, devoid of sin, actuated with a desire for holiness; and, at the same time, firm and constant in the practice of virtue? If not, then you are in a pitiable condition; perhaps infidels and heretics are then leading a far better life than you; then I fear Christ will one day, as your Judge, pronounce this sentence against you: Depart from me; your faith condemns you; because you have professed Me with your lips, but by your life you have denied Me! Amen!

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"No man can serve two masters."—Matt. 6.

NO one can serve two masters, as Christ Himself assures us. And yet what a number of those who believe in Christ, although they dare not, of course, contradict the Word of Christ in explicit terms, yet do so by their lives! They live as if they would like to serve both God and the world; they do not want to be at variance with God or the world.

These are the people who do things by halves; who can not choose between two ways, and resemble the children of Israel at the time of the prophet Elias. Men who conduct themselves differently in Church and out of it; who behave differently in company of priests, and of those who scoff at religion and her ministers; men who sin and confess, confess and sin; who live in habitual sins, and whatever they do, as children of the Church, do it by habit; and as to their business matters and worldly affairs, they follow the same principles as the heathens and worldlings.

And who is not aware what a contagious and seducing influence their example has on the lives of others!

How important, therefore, is it that we reflect earnestly upon the words of Christ: "No one can serve two masters." "He who is not with Me is against Me;" "He who gathereth not with Me, scattereth."

We shall to-day consider one of these two masters, namely: God and His service, and we shall reflect what kind of a master God is, and how meet it is to serve Him earnestly, joyfully, and perseveringly.

O Mary, who hast called thyself a handmaid of the Lord, pray for us, that we may live in such a manner, as to be justified in saying: I am a servant, a handmaid of the Lord!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

O my God, my Lord! This is an ejaculation which we very frequently utter. We justly call God also our Lord. He is our Creator, from Whom we have received every thing, by the power of Whose will all nature came into existence and continues in it. And, therefore, it is our duty to serve God willingly, and to serve Him as perfectly as possible.

Would it not be a disgrace if we, as reasonable beings, who know God, and call Him our Father, would in this respect allow ourselves to be excelled by irrational creatures? But in order that this desire, this resolution, be renewed and strengthened within us, let us consider frequently, yes, daily and hourly, in what an infinitely higher degree all those qualities, which in

ordinary life induce us to serve a person, are combined in God.

The first quality which distinguishes a person whom we would wish to serve and own as master, is his respectability, his dignity,—that he is of high rank, perhaps a governor, a king, or even an emperor.

An office at court, even if very insignificant, is nevertheless highly valued, because of the social position of the person whom we serve. It is for the sake of honor and distinction that even counts and princes sue for offices at a kingly court. Yes, even an ordinary valet or cook of a king or emperor, deems himself superior to his less fortunate brethren.

Now, then, let us reflect upon the meaning of these words: "God! *I serve God.*" Have we not weighty reasons for exclaiming with St. Michael: "Who is like to God?" God, I serve Thee! Thee Whom all the angels and saints, all the heavenly chiefs serve, and whose glory and magnificence heaven and earth proclaim.

But what still more determines us to serve a person, to acknowledge him as master, is his *personality*, the nobility and uprightness of his *character*, which cause us to feel that he would never demand any thing of us save what is good and praiseworthy.

If in spirit we listen to the Sanctus, which all the Seraphim repeat continually before the throne of God, with what determination will we exclaim: "Thou three times holy God, my Lord; I serve Thee! What wouldst Thou have me do?"

The third quality which would induce us to enter the service of another, and acknowledge him our master, is his *goodness*. We would gladly serve one whose greatest delight is to make all his dependents happy, and to bestow favors upon them, especially if we ourselves have already received benefits from him. How frequently we hear one person saying to another: Oh, if I could always be with you! Oh, how can I ever repay you for all you have done for me!

Let us apply this to God and His service. God is in Himself infinite, perfect goodness. And this goodness He desires to impart to all human beings whom He has created. Just as it is in the nature of the sun to impart light and heat, so it is also peculiar to the goodness of God to continually bestow favors upon a creature, as far as it is susceptible of them, and does not on its part oppose any barrier. He rewards our service, even on this earth, by the joys of a good conscience, by the possession and enjoyment of many created objects, and by His communication with us in prayer. What an inducement for us to serve God, even if we had not received from Him any special promise of reward!

I said that if we had received numerous and precious gifts and favors from another, our gratitude would prompt us to serve him. The animals are ready to serve their masters for the food they obtain from him; they accompany him every-where, and at times even sacrifice their lives for their benefactor.

Let us apply this also to God, our Creator and Pre-

server and Redeemer. Oh, how many important, precious graces and treasures have we not already received from God, from the moment of our birth until the present day! Body and soul, the use of our senses, every ray of light, every breath we draw, every morsel of food, every refreshing draught, every thread of our garments, also the talents which we possess, all that we enjoy in this life we owe to God. And when we remember the grace of redemption, our calling to the true Church, and all the gifts and graces which, as children of the Church, we possess and receive at every moment, have we not motives for the deepest gratitude? Should we not exclaim: Merciful God, my Lord and Benefactor, I thank Thee; I will serve Thee gratefully?

The fourth quality which induces us to enter the service of a person is the *compensation*. If the reward is considerably greater than that given by other masters, and if at the same time we are aware that in the service of this person, we will be provided for and made happy, then we will not only be willing and anxious to serve such a master, but deem ourselves most fortunate in being received into his service.

What an inducement for us to exclaim joyfully: O God, my Lord and Renumerator, I will serve Thee! Even on this earth we enjoy the hundred-fold that consolation and joy which Christ has promised all followers in the service of the Lord. And furthermore, for every good work which we perform, we have the promise of an eternal reward. For every good deed

there awaits us a recompense, of which it is written: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." Whosoever shall glorify Me, him will I glorify." "Enter into the joys of thy Lord." Who would not be willing to serve a prince, or king, or emperor, who, as a reward, would permit his servant to share his power and glory; and still more if he would give him the promise of a throne, and enable him to rule as a king?

This is the case in the service of the Lord, and it should encourage us in the divine service. "I myself," says the Lord, "will be thy great reward." "Thou hast made us kings, that we might reign eternally," so rejoice the saints in heaven, as St. John affirms.

We gladly serve another if he is united to us by ties of kindred. And this can be said with regard to the service of God. He is not only our God, but at the same time our Father. Even in this world we call ourselves His children, and it is not yet known what we shall enjoy when once we shall enter His glory.

And when the fire of divine love inflames our heart, and we have even on earth a foretaste of the eternal union with God, in what transports of joy does not then the soul break forth: "O my God! my love, I am Thine! Lord, I serve Thee, because I love Thee. Lord! what dost Thou wish me to do?" Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"No man can serve two masters."—Matt. 9.

EITHER to the right or to the left. This shall one day be the sentence of the divine Judge. The one or other will befall every one of us; and the decision will depend upon the life we have led on earth, whether we have served God or the world; that is, whether we were replenished with the Spirit of God, and by Him enlightened and strengthened to know and accomplish the Divine will, and to provide for that which is to come after death, and which will endure for all eternity; or whether, on the contrary, the spirit of the world had taken possession of our hearts and inflamed us with the desire to live as honored and as happy as possible during our brief sojourn on this earth, unconcerned whether we were accomplishing the will of God or not.

Either the Spirit of the Holy Ghost enkindles our hearts, and urges us to walk in the way of the Lord, with determination, strength and fidelity,—or the spirit of the world possesses our hearts, and we serve the world; that is to say, we seek that which the world displays and promises; we let it persuade us that the service of man is of greater importance than the service of God,—that we ought to feel greater dread of offending man than God; we live, so that we expose

ourselves to its dangers, and, as the Apostle threatens, of perishing with the world.

I will prove to you to-day what a disgrace and folly it is to serve the world and her maxims, instead of serving God.

O Mary, mother of God, spouse of the Holy Ghost, pray for us, that the Holy Spirit may destroy in us the spirit of the world, and that, as thy children, we may serve God and be saved!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

I said, it is either the Spirit of God which reigns in our hearts, and induces us to enter the service of God, strengthening and encouraging us therein; or it is the spirit of the world, which impels us to serve the world and live in compliance with its principles. But woe to us, if we serve it and acknowledge it as our master!

What I understand by the world, and the spirit of the world, I have intimated in my introduction.

The world, taken in this sense, is that portion of mankind whose desires are all concentrated on the possessions, honors and enjoyments of this life. These children, servants, slaves of the world, look upon religion as a secondary matter; they do not trouble themselves about it in the least, but imagine and say that all religions are one and the same; the first and

most important care is happiness in this life, come what may in the next!

To the world, in this sense, belong those also who, with their lips, profess the doctrines of faith, but by their lives deny them and side with the scoffers of religion, and infidels who do not believe in a life to come, and will not admit of any other than the one here below.

In this signification did Christ say of the world: "The world is full of wickedness." In this sense did Christ speak of the world when He said: "Father, I pray Thee, but not for the world."

Of this world it is written: "Who sides with it, shall perish!"

And yet what a number, even of the children of the Church, follow the world, and labor in her service, instead of the service of God. How foolish and deluded these worldlings are is apparent, when we reflect, on the one hand, upon the qualities of God, which particularly induce us, and encourage and strengthen us in serving Him as our Lord and Master; and, on the other hand, compare them with the opposite qualities which characterize the world and its service.

I say: Let us serve God; He is of Himself an infinite and most glorious Being—the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the earth.

What is the world? The world in itself, taken in its broadest sense, includes all things in nature; it is nothing of itself; was nothing from all eternity; and

does not exist of itself, but through God, without whose support it would at any moment fall back into its original nonentity.

And what are all those, of whom I have before spoken, who are living in this world and for this world? What are they,—all these sinners,—even if every one of them be adorned with a royal diadem? They are all nothing of themselves; they have come into existence in disgrace with God, owing to the fall of our first parents. And in what a miserable state are they, owing to the countless actual sins which they have committed during their life! They are beings whose souls were created according to the image of God, but who, by their willful, actual sins, have stamped it with the likeness of Satan, the father of sin. As to their bodies, they may justly be compared to a mass of putrid matter.

And what is all their exterior power and glory and possessions? vanishing smoke,—a bauble, which glitters to-day and disappears to-morrow! They are beings who, with us, will soon appear at the judgment-seat of God, and, as slaves of Satan, will be condemned to eternal perdition!

And is it possible that we could resolve to serve the world in preference to God? What an ignominy!

But God in His glory is, at the same time, infinite holiness and goodness. Let us serve Him. What is the world which, on the other hand, seeks to draw us away from God, and advises us to follow her? The world, whose banner bears the inscription: Con-

cupiscence of the eyes, concupiscence of the flesh, and pride of life,—she is a sink, a filth, and a rankness!

Could we but view the frightful sins which the worldling commits daily and hourly! Could we but see the loathsomeness of the vices of pride, vanity, covetousness, envy, anger, gluttony, and lust to which the worldling is addicted, we would blush with same!

And how frequently does it not happen that persons, whom we have considered just and virtuous, are stripped of their mask by some unexpected occurrence, and they appear steeped in abominable vices! And should we serve such a world? No; if we look upon her, covered with the filth of sin, we will answer her with determination and indignation: Filthy world, depart!—I will follow my God; for He is perfect holiness, and His true servants and children are noble and holy.

God is, moreover, infinite goodness; He is our constant Benefactor, bestowing His benefits from the moment of our conception. He grants a reward, even on this earth; for He requites even a good thought with that feeling of peace and love which gives us a foretaste of the sweetness of the Lord's service even in this world; He will finally reward us in the life to come, when we will receive an eternal, incalculable recompense for every good thought and desire, for every good work performed in His service.

The world, on the contrary, is naught but selfishness and egotism; she loves but self, and all other things merely for the sake of self. She does not pos-

sess that goodness which loves to share with others; on the contrary, she seeks to accumulate all she can for herself, and those who serve her are requited poorly and wretchedly. "The world's reward is ingratitude," says an old proverb.

A proof of this are the cares and difficulties which harass a person whilst endeavoring to earn his daily bread. How often he is at a loss! How frequently he is disappointed in his expectations, defrauded of his rights, injured in his possessions, or deprived of them altogether,—just because he served the world and her followers!

And suppose this were not the case, but that the sinner could possess and enjoy all in this world,—the wounded conscience would not permit him to enjoy it peacefully. Holy Scripture and experience teach us that "there is no rest for the wicked."

Oh, how dreadful the pangs of a guilty conscience! But even if this were not the case, still what a void the human heart experiences amid the possessions and enjoyment of all created objects and pleasures! This caused Solomon to exclaim: "Vanity of vanities!" And why? St. Augustine replies: "Thou hast, O Lord, created this heart for Thee, and it rests not until it rests in Thee."

And if the worldling would really feel happy and contented in his possession, how soon—how very soon—will death deprive him of all, and then—what awaits him in eternity?

For the little which the world has given him for

his fidelity in her service, if thereby he has grievously offended God, she will prepare for him, for every sinful thought, every desire, and every deed,—for every sinful enjoyment in her service,—eternal sufferings!

Beloved in Christ, when we reflect upon the character of the world, and upon the consequences of serving her, her persuasions lose their power of drawing us away from God; and yet we can scarcely comprehend how it is possible that, nevertheless, so many persons, even children of the Church, do not live in the service of God, but in that of the world,—the vain, wretched, sinful, selfish, deceptive, and transitory world, and in this manner expose themselves to the danger of perishing with her!

Therefore, children of the Church, reflect continually upon that, of which my sermon of to-day reminds you; examine your conscience daily in regard to it, and say to yourself: Should I serve such a deceitful world, and prefer her to my God? No—never!—Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"You can not serve God and mammon."—Matt. 9.

CHRIST speaks of two masters who demand our services, namely: God and the world. He declares, at the same time, that it is impossible to serve both. We can easily comprehend why Christ declares this twofold service impossible. The consideration of God and His nature, and of the world and her doings, will prove that to serve both is utterly impossible. God is infinite perfection and holiness; the world is full of wickedness.

The service of God has relation to our life in the next world; the service of the world regards only that which is temporal, that which exists at present, but will one day pass away. The service which God requires of us is inseparably united with the fulfillment of the duties of our holy religion. The world cares not for religion, nor for the sanctification of our lives. The service of God is incompatible with sin; the service of the world is inseparable from sin.

These are contrasts which are evidently not compatible. This opposition shows itself particularly in the wrong aim which the world pursues in her doings and movements, and which stamp the children of the world as worldlings, namely: The inordinate desire for money, covetousness and avarice.

The Gospel applies the word "blessed" to the poor;

the world, on the contrary, applies it to the rich. This is even proven by an old saying: Money is the god of the world. The worldling is prepared to do any thing for the sake of money.

Let us consider to-day how despicable, foolish and dangerous is covetousness and the inordinate desire for money. In other words: We will notice the contrast between the service of mammon and the service of God.

O Mary, thou poor virgin of Nazareth, mother of the poor infant Jesus, pray for us, that our hearts may be freed from covetousness and avarice.

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

Love of money, covetousness, avarice—the religion of the world! What is avarice? It is that pernicious tendency of the human heart to have and to possess, for the sake of having and possessing.

What does Scripture say of this disposition which prompts a man to attach himself to money, and to temporal possessions? Holy Scripture, through the mouth of St. Paul, calls it: Idolatry. This appellation is not an oratorical exaggeration, but it literally marks the character and the nature of covetousness; yes, it is truly idolatry, for idolatry consists in transferring to a creature the worship which we owe to God alone. And in what does this worship consist? Christ gives the answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with

thy whole strength." But it is thus exactly the avaricious person is disposed in regard to money and worldly possessions.

You, who love money, am I correct? Ask your heart. Christ says: "Where your treasure is, there is also your heart." That is, there your thoughts, desires, resolutions and endeavors will center. Now, then, what is your first thought on awaking in the morning? Not God, but your business—your probable gain or loss. Of what do you think during the day? Your whole attention is given to your occupation, to gaining wealth. And this also is your last thought at night! Not what you have won or lost for heaven, during the course of the day; but what you have profited or lost in your business!

I believe there are persons of this kind even now before me, who, during their lives, have endeavored their utmost to gain every cent they possibly could. And what is the consequence? Your money is your god; the excessive care, the money-question, is your religion!

I therefore justly remark, in the first place: What an abominable vice is avarice, both in the sight of God and your own! No, you can not serve God and mammon at the same time.

I say, secondly: It is a degrading and absurd disposition of mind. Degrading, without doubt! Remember the words which St. Paul addressed to the heathens: "You are of a godly race, and you adore gold, your idols of gold!" Are you not ashamed to

adore gold? The man of money, if he is a Christian, would not, of course, adore a statue of gold, as did the heathens, nor a golden calf, as did the faithless Israelites. But still the nature of their worship is precisely the same, as I have before shown you; and, in our times, this gold and money-service is still more degrading, since paper is the representative of gold at present. And what is paper? Rags and tatters are the materials of which it is made, and yet with what an eager eye the man of money regards such a rag when the worth of a hundred or a thousand dollars is stamped upon it; for its possession he sacrifices time and opportunity of doing good, and of laboring for the salvation of souls.

Deluded and foolish man! The more so when we reflect upon the words of the Holy Ghost, which affirms that: "Every sin shall in itself be punished." These words may be justly applied to avarice.

For the covetous person, instead of being free from care, and using his accumulated wealth for the procuring of comforts which might render his life more pleasant and enjoyable, is every day more and more disturbed by the care of his money and possessions. And it frequently happens that the wealthier a person becomes, the less he imagines he possesses, and he strives with still greater anxiety to acquire more, and to secure what he has.

Christ speaks of the thorns which choke the good seed, and He Himself explains that the thorns signify the cares of man for the goods of this world.

And experience proves how disastrous temporal cares are to the spirit of piety. It is owing to our extreme anxiety about the goods of this world that in many cases the good resolutions which we form during a sermon, or in the confessional, are stifled and rendered fruitless.

What a dangerous disposition of mind is the inordinate desire of money! If we are in earnest, to serve God and be saved, it is necessary to begin even in our youth to raise our hearts heavenward. It is necessary that we not only earnestly and zealously strive to know our duties, but also to perform them. It is likewise necessary to use faithfully the means which God in His mercy has given us as children of the Church; namely: prayer, divine service, and the Holy Sacraments, and to seek carefully the means and opportunities of performing as many corporal and spiritual works of mercy as possible. The craving for money prevents all this.

Even in early youth, when there is question of choosing a path for life, the thought: whether such is the state to which God has called us, and which will offer the best opportunities for serving Him, does not enter our minds. We only take care to see whether it is a state which offers us prospects of becoming rich, of providing for ourselves. And this is our aim during all successive years; we thereby neglect the duties of our religion, excusing ourselves by saying: We have no time for prayer! And why? I must attend to my business. And how very often this could be postponed

for a half hour or an hour; we could even hear a Mass; but for this we no longer find it worth the while to devote a few minutes.

Thus we begin the day without morning-prayer, and pass it without one thought of God; neglect spiritual reading and the reception of the Holy Sacraments, and thus become careless as to gathering treasures for the life to come; and, by committing mortal sins, we become traitors to Christ. Could our Lord have allowed a more heinous crime for the warning of the children of the Church than the base treachery of Judas!

He, as an Apostle, was chosen from among the whole race of mankind to come in daily contact with Christ. He was with our Lord during three years, conversed with Him, and listened to all His sermons, witnessed His miracles, even the resurrection of Lazarus; and, despite all these favors, his love for money caused him to become a traitor, and to sell his Lord and Master for an ignominious price. Take a look at him, suspended by the neck,—at him, the Apostle and suicide!

Christians! let this example be a warning to you! Woe to you, if your heart is more attached to mammon than to God, and if you labor more earnestly for money than in the service of God! I fear you are one of those souls in whom the threat of our Lord will be verified: "Woe to the rich!" Amen!

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And when He came nigh to the gates of the city, behold! a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow."—Luke 7.

CHRIST, accompanied by a great multitude, approaches the city of Naim, and behold! the corpse of a youth was just borne out of the city gates, followed by a number of people, and his grief-stricken mother. It seemed an accidental meeting, and yet it was not so. Christ, the life, meets death, and again breathes life into the corpse. This unexpected meeting, especially as the dead body was that of a youth, reminds us of the certainty and proximity of death and of the uncertainty of life. It is ordained that all men shall die, as Holy Scripture assures and experience teaches us; and yet, how careless man is in this regard, and what little benefit he derives from meditating upon this truth. Nevertheless it is a truth which, when duly considered, will exert a most decided influence on our lives, and will urge us to arrange the affairs pertaining to our salvation.

Holy Scripture assures us even in the Old Testament: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray

for the dead." St. Paul speaks of this continual remembrance of death as "The answer of death within us.

How sincerely I wish that, with St. Paul, we may all feel the continual warning of approaching and certain death—the answer of death within us—and that we may not be seized with that forgetfulness of death, which is, alas! so common.

O Mary, patroness of a happy death, pray for us that we live in such manner, as to die, in your arms, the death of the blessed!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

When St. Anthony was lying on his death-bed, he was surrounded by hundreds of his spiritual sons, and they begged of him: "Holy father, you are about to leave us; advise us: which is the most influential, the powerful thought to animate one with great zeal in the service of God?" St Anthony replied: "Brethren, live every day as if it were to be the last."

With these words St. Anthony referred to the certainty and nearness of death, but at the same time also to the uncertainty as regards the time, the place, and the manner of death.

Nothing else in this world is infallibly certain and sure. The wealthiest may become indigent; the most powerful may lose his crown; the healthiest may be stricken with disease. Yes, even as regards the last

judgment, and heaven and hell. No one knows with infallible certainty what shall be his portion forever; but *one* thing every one knows—*he must die.*

A multitude followed the corpse of the youth. Every person who joined the procession must have thought within himself: I shall also one day be thus borne to my grave. But when? No one knows.

This youth who is borne away as a corpse did certainly not imagine that he was to die before his aged mother.

He who constantly reflects upon what I have said, and lives as if every day were his last, needs no further incentive in order to lead a holy life. And why? This will appear evident when we reflect in what Christian perfection consists, and how the remembrance of certain and approaching death will influence us in this respect.

In the first place, Christian perfection requires a heart free from sin. *Shun evil.* Therefore a person must, above all things, be able candidly to put this question to his conscience: Am I in the state of mortal sin or not? But this must be done as candidly and earnestly as if we were certain to die the following moment and be judged.

And when a man has thus proven himself, his faith requires of him, that he reconcile himself to God by an entire and sincere confession. But nothing will better bring about this change than the remembrance of the certainty and proximity of death. If one confesses in such a manner, as he will wish to have done

when the cold sweat of death stands upon his brow, he will confess well. And that our confessions may really be good and valid, let this truth urge us to the conscientious performance of this duty; do it well; you do not know whether you will ever again have another opportunity; it is, perhaps, your last confession.

"Father, this is probably your last confession," thus St. Vincent de Paul was addressed by one of his spiritual sons. The saint replied: "Friend, for a number of years I have said to myself: This confession will, perhaps, be my last."

But to reconcile ourselves to God is not our only obligation; the most important duty is, not to sin again, not to suffer a relapse. What causes a relapse? Fresh temptations. These temptations come to us in divers ways: We are tempted by the concupiscence of the flesh; the world tempts us by her allurements and pleasures; Satan tempts and endeavors to deceive us by investing forbidden objects with delusive charms and attractions. It is especially by means of the honors, possessions, and enjoyments of this life that the world, the flesh, and the devil tempt us. And, no doubt, these things, viewed in the light of the present, possess various charms, and can become snares and dangerous temptations.

But the vivid remembrance of the certain approach of death will nip all these temptations in the bud, and will render them powerless. For what are all worldly possessions, when viewed in the twilight of life's fad-

ing day? Dust! What are all the honors of this world? Vapor! What are all sensual enjoyments? Dross!

And even the satisfaction which man enjoys for a time in the possession of wealth, honors, and sensual pleasures will soon end in death.

If we listen to the voice of death within us, the power of temptation will be completely destroyed; because this remembrance of death is inseparably connected with the remembrance of that which is to come after death, and which will decide our eternal destiny. Therefore, the Apostle after saying: "It is appointed for all men once to die," immediately adds: "And after this the judgment."

How could man remain in the state of sin, if he constantly reflected upon the terrors of judgment, or how ever relapse into sin! The *Memento mori*—the remembrance that very soon death will usher you into eternity—is the surest preventive against the evil of sin.

This constant remembrance of our end likewise effects the sanctification of our lives, and encourages us in our endeavors to attain Christian *perfection;* it urges us to accomplish the holy will of God perfectly, in all places and at all times; it puts us in mind of the value of time, and the necessity of making good use of the present; it encourages us not to lose a single moment in the great work of our salvation, nor to neglect the increase of our glory in heaven. But nothing can so clearly prove the inestimable value

of time as death,—the certainty and nearness of death!

"Time, thou art worth as much as God," St. Chrysostom was wont to say; "for on every hour of time depends a crown for eternity; to win time, is to win God; to lose time, is to lose God."

Death deprives us of this exceedingly precious gift; a gift for which the angels and saints of heaven envy us.

Now, that we live but once, this once will decide our eternity; this was a maxim of the saints. When once time has flown, it will never again return. We feel this most vividly when attending a death-bed, and considering the last breath which the dying person draws. Now he has expired—now his eternal fate is sealed. Not another opportunity of performing a good deed, of increasing his heavenly joys.

I ask: Is there any thing which can urge us more to improve our time for the approaching eternity, than this certainty and proximity of death, this voice of death within us?

Oh, that every case of death brought to our notice would remind us with renewed force of the certain approach of eternity!

You should do more; every evening whilst offering your prayers to God, reflect upon some particular circumstance of your death. Think of your last confession, of your last Holy Communion, of extreme unction; and of what you will experience when your soul

takes leave of your body; think of your grave, of your appearance before the judgment seat of Christ.

Do this, and no doubt the advice of St. Anthony will not only prove beneficial to his religious sons, but also to you, for the sanctification of your whole life! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And when he came nigh to the gates of the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of a widow."—Luke 7.

THERE is nothing more certain than death. Every thing else is morally certain, possible, probable, as far as regards our future.

Last year we reflected upon the influence this consideration exercises upon our will; it causes us to form the resolution of living as true children of the Church, according to our vocation, to avoid sin, to practise virtue, and to make the best use of time. Even the longest life, how brief it is! and how near is death! How short is a year! Observe how quickly the moon waxes and wanes, and, after thirteen of these changes, a year has passed. And the life of man numbers but seventy or eighty years, and how few reach this age! the majority of those born into the world die as children, and many in the prime of life!

The deceased of whom the Gospel of to-day makes mention is a youth.

You will die,—that is certain; and you will die soon,—this, too, is certain; but how and where you will die is uncertain, also the manner of your death. But it is not exactly so in reference to the moral condition of your soul; and its state, at the time of death, is of the utmost importance.

A proverb says: "As is life, such is death," there-

fore, *if you have lived indifferently, the troubled death-bed of the tepid Christian awaits you; but if you have lived a zealous and holy life, then on your death-bed you will feel the consolation of the just.*

Brethren, let us to-day reflect upon this contrast, and in our dying moments we shall not regret having done so, provided we profit by the light that the Holy Ghost will send to illumine our minds.

O Mary, our protectress in death, obtain for us, from your beloved Son, the consoling death of the just!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

What, in the first place, causes the lukewarm Christian sadness and affliction of mind on his death-bed, is inordinate attachment to the goods of this world.

No doubt, all who lead an indifferent life will attach themselves more or less to the things of this world; but it is particularly the case with persons who have labored incessantly and under great difficulties to acquire temporal possessions, and who have anxiously provided for their comfort.

This country furnishes many instances of this kind. Many a one who came over from Europe at first settled in the backwoods; there he occupied a log-cabin, and by dint of labor cleared and cultivated the land. Then he erected a more comfortable dwelling, and gradually gained riches until finally he became affluent. Another commenced business in one of the

larger cities, prospered, and became wealthy. But, lo! now death raps at his door, and he feels that he must die; he must take leave of all, and can not take even one penny with him!

No wonder that such a Christian, who, amid temporal cares, has abandoned the practices of devotion and of Christian zeal, sighs, with Agag, at the approach of death: "And dost thou part us thus, O bitter death?"

But how widely different the death of a child of the Church, who has led a fervent life, often thought of heaven, suffered, worked, and fought for it; who has already separated his heart from the transitory things of this world, and, on his death-bed, can joyfully exclaim, with David: "We enter with joy into heaven, to behold, to possess, and to enjoy the things of the Lord in the land of the living!" Child of the Church, a similar death do I wish you. And what are the conditions? A zealous, truly Catholic life.

What furthermore renders the death-bed of the tepid Christian gloomy and fearful, is the inordinate attachment to blood relations.

It is true there is a lawful, holy and sanctifying union among men,—ties of relationship, friendship and virtue, and the heart must feel a pang at the moment of separation. But this sorrow will increase the merits of the dying Christian, because he resigns himself to the will of God; and, moreover, his sorrow is assuaged by the hope of a speedy reunion in heaven.

The lukewarm Christian experiences not this consolation; he feels only the grief of parting from those who are near and dear to him in this world.

And again, how consoling for the fervent soul will be the thought: I take leave of my dearly loved ones on earth, but what an assembly waits to welcome me in heaven! I hope that very soon I shall be with Jesus and Mary, and all the angels and saints, with all my blessed friends and relations, who are anxiously looking forward to my entrance into the eternal joys. This thought gives comfort to the soul. A similar death do I wish you, my brethren; an active, Catholic, pious life will secure it for you.

The death-bed of a careless Christian is hemmed in with fear and anxiety, because the *consolations* of our holy religion have lost their power over him, and can not drive away the sadness of death. The tepid Christian may have confessed at times, but how? He felt no apprehension from his numerous relapses, and looked upon them as merely the result of human weakness. But now he becomes alarmed; were not these mortal sins into which he relapsed? Or, during life, he endeavored to persuade himself that he did not sin willfully; he did not consent. But now he fears that his confessions were not valid, because he did not express himself clearly as to this or that sin, or did not confess the number and circumstances, as he was obliged to do. And what of his communions? Were they not, perhaps, unworthy, or sacrilegious communions? His preparations and thanksgivings were

so short, so tepid, and, consequently, without effect. And now that he is to receive Holy Communion for the last time, his bodily sufferings will not permit him to dispose himself devoutly for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament as a preparation for his passage into eternity. He receives his last communion with fear and dread. But how unlike this is the death of him who, on this earth, has lived only for Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, who has received Him again and again, and each time more worthily, and who now receives his Lord, Redeemer, and the Spouse of his heart as the viaticum to eternal life! The priest places the Sacred Host upon his tongue, as a pledge of his salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Such a reception of the Holy Eucharist on your death-bed, do I wish you; your life,—a zealous, devout, Catholic life will decide.

What renders the hour of death terrible to a lukewarm Christian, is the fear of death itself, and that which follows it—the *corruption* of the body in the grave. Yes, to a petted worldling, who knows nothing of penance and mortification in this life, and who has always pampered his body, and gratified his senses, how dreadful the thought: What shall become of me in my last agony, when the cold sweat of death oozes from every pore, when death shall stretch my limbs? What, when all that remains of me on earth lies moldering in the grave, and is food for worms? It is not surprising that such thoughts fill the soul of

an indifferent Christian with fear and distress! But how different the situation, if the dying person is one who has practised, during life, interior and exterior mortification, and who tastes not the bitterness of death, and looks forward to a glorious resurrection! The pious Christian remembers that it is only his body that lies within the grave, and that he shall one day find it again transformed and glorious, and be reunited to it for a blissful eternity.

What finally renders the death-bed of a lukewarm Christian fearful, is the thought of the coming judgment. When a soul is about to leave this world in a tepid and sinful state, even if after a good confession it is reinstated in grace, what a terror, what a fright, must weigh upon it, when, disfigured by the leprosy of countless venial sins, it appears before Christ, not knowing whether these sins may not be mortal! And how the soul will tremble when Christ is about to utter the sentence which will decide its fate for eternity!

Oh, could it but again return to the body, to lead a better, holier life! but then it will be too late,—too late!

May God preserve you from such anguish!

On the other hand, what a consolation and joy when a devout soul departs this life; and, freed from every stain of sin by the Holy Sacrament of Penance, hastens to the arms of its Redeemer, and, without passing through purgatory, enters at once into the joys of the Lord

Either the one death or the other will be yours, and your life will decide!

May God grant that it will not have been a lukewarm and indifferent, but a holy and virtuous life. Then to you may be applied the words of Holy Writ: "Precious in the sight of God is the death of His saints!" Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And they that carried it stood still."—Luke 7.

"AND they that carried it stood still." Christ approaches the corpse, but He does not restore the deceased to life as long as the pall-bearers move on. "They that carried it stood still," probably at a sign given by our Lord.

There is something very striking in this circumstance, if we consider attentively the miracle which Christ wrought at the gates of Naim, in its moral signification. For the raising of the dead to life has reference to the miracle of the conversion from sin to the state of grace,—a change from the death of the soul through sin, to the spiritual life through grace.

The four pall-bearers typify four causes of the sinner's impenitence. These are: the proximate occasion of sin; want of prayer; familiar intercourse with sinners; and inordinate longing after enjoyment!

Yes, these are the four spiritual pall-bearers of the soul dead in sin, and as long as these do not stand still, so long will the funeral procession move on; and there can be no thought of a true conversion and spiritual resurrection. And although at times the sinner may appear to be converted, still we can very soon perceive, that, in the sight of God, he is still a corpse!

Let us to-day take a glance at the four pall-bearers of the soul dead in sin.

O Mary, refuge of sinners, pray for us, that we may awaken from the death of sin!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

The first pall-bearer which carries the dead soul of a sinner to its grave, is the proximate occasion of sin!

How indispensably necessary the avoidance of the proximate occasion of sin is for a true conversion, can be readily deduced from the earnest and solemn words of Christ: "If thy eye scandalize thee, tear it out and cast it from thee; and if thy hand or foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body go into hell."

But, alas! how many deceive themselves in this respect, and imagine, if they but form the good resolution of not sinning again, it matters little whether they remain in the proximate occasion of sin; this, in their opinion, is no sin. But that is a delusion proceeding from their defective instruction. The remaining willfully in the occasion of sin, is already a sin; and if there is danger of mortal sins, the sin of remaining in the occasion becomes mortal; because to remain willfully therein, is to expose one's self willfully to sin, which is in itself an offense.

Experience verifies the warning of the Holy Ghost: "He who loveth danger, shall perish therein." To remain in the occasion of sin, is like putting fire, if it be but a burning match, to straw, and then saying: I do not want the straw to burn. But it will burn nevertheless, and you will be the cause.

This warning has reference especially to the lewd, to drunkards, and to those who are intimate with persons of loose morals.

The second cause of the sinner's remaining in the sleep of death, the second pall-bearer of his soul, is the neglect of prayer and the Holy Sacraments. As a rule, persons commit grievous sins only after having first become careless in their prayers and in the reception of the Holy Sacraments. For these are the means of grace ordained by God, and these alone enable us to subdue temptations, and to practise virtue. There are many who sin continually, but at times they appear to be converted; and yet, how very soon they are again spiritual corpses! And why? They omit their morning and night prayers; do not attend divine service; neglect spiritual reading, and the reception of the Holy Sacraments.

We do not go too far in affirming: That all those who begin the day without prayer, who do not think of God during the day, and do not pray at night; who are careless in attending divine service, or do not go to church at all on Sundays and holidays; who are negligent in the reception of the Sacraments,—all of these belong to the class of the spiritual dead. They

may confess at times, and appear to do better; but until they begin earnestly to say their prayers, to attend divine service as is their duty, and do not receive the Holy Sacraments only at Easter time, but frequently during the course of the year, their conversion will not be a true one. They will very soon lead the old life of sin; nor will they improve in this respect, unless they perform the duties of their holy religion earnestly and fervently, and frequently approach the Holy Sacraments.

The third cause why sinners continue their life of sin—the third pall-bearer of the soul is, familiar intercourse with sinners, their society and company. With the wicked you will be wicked and remain so.

As long as a person does not avoid familiar intercourse with sinners, he will open his heart to numerous temptations, and the bad example of others will have a pernicious influence upon him. The bad example of sinners may be compared to the diseases of the body. When one is near a sick person, or is obliged to wait on him, one is in great danger of becoming infected with the disease. Physicians who attend the sick, make their visits as brief as possible when the disease is contagious, and hurry away, lest they may become infected!

The same may be said of sinners, whose example proves contagious. Such sinners may justly be compared to lepers. From these you must flee, as Holy Scripture advises. This admonition is addressed particularly to young persons.

If your conversion shall prove sincere and lasting, you must avoid familiar intercourse with sinners; otherwise you will soon recommence a life of sin.

The fourth bearer of the spiritual corpse is inordinate longing for enjoyments—the love of sensual, boisterous pleasure, such as balls, plays, and noctural amusements; the reading of bad books, and especially the excessive use of spirituous liquors. Woe to him who already, from his youth, becomes addicted to drink, to frequent gin-shops,—is and gradually becomes a confirmed sot!

Oh! how seldom it occurs that an habitual drunkard is truly converted,—that he avoids every occasion of intemperance, and remains faithful to his good resolutions! How often such persons, who, perchance, are not addicted to any other vice, seem to amend—and still they do not really change; they lead the same intemperate life! And how sad are the consequences, both for body and soul! They ruin their health, destroy their domestic peace, and are living in the greatest danger of dying unprepared.

Is there, perhaps, a sinner among us whom these four bearers are carrying? Oh! I wish I could to-day cause them to stand still. For only then will your conversion be sincere, and, by the mouth of the priest, Christ will bid you: "Rise!"—and you will be restored to the life of grace.

This standing still reminds us, moreover, of another very important fact. If we wish to be justified in hoping that ours was a true conversion, we must be

able to refer to some period of our life, and say: Since that confession—it was a general confession—I did not relapse!

Rejoice, if your conscience gives you this testimony; you are in the right state, and you will be prepared to appear before God, and you will live in Him eternally!—Amen!

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And they watched Him."—Luke 14.

THE Gospel of to-day remarks that the Pharisees watched Christ, when He entered the house of one of their prominent men. They were anxious to see how Jesus would conduct Himself; not to learn of Him; no—to criticise and caluminate Him!

The disposition of the Pharisees was unkind and hostile.

How advantageous it would be for us, if we constantly meditated upon and watched Christ in spirit, that we might learn of Him, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, what is required of us,—how we must live,—in order to render ourselves more and more conformable to Him.

For, as St. Paul assures us, they whom God has called unto His glory, He hath likewise called to be "conformable to the image of His Son." This imitation of Christ, this becoming like unto Him during our lives, is a pledge and an assurance of our salvation.

And this conformity to Christ on earth will also de-

cide the degree of our glory in heaven. The more conformable we have been to Him in life, the more conformable we shall be to Him in the kingdom of glory.

O Mary, thou who rankest next to Jesus in glory, because, during life, thou didst follow Him, even to the foot of the cross, obtain for us, that we may, during our lives, continually keep our eyes upon Him, that we may know, love, and serve Him more and more, and thereby be more closely united to Him in heaven!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God.

St. Paul writes: "What else do I desire, than that you grow in the knowledge and love of God?" This desire, every priest, every pastor entertains. For what is the aim of the priestly vocation but to assist souls in the great work of salvation? And what will insure success? what will bring about its accomplishment? It is our conformity of life to that of Christ, according to the words of St. Paul just quoted.

It is evident that this assimilation to Christ will increase in proportion as we imitate Christ, our Model, by the practice of virtue.

There is no doubt, that if we wish to be saved, we must follow Christ; and in order to accomplish this, we must, above all things, possess a knowledge and love of Christ. I say, first: We must have a knowl-

edge of Christ, or we shall fail to understand our Model; and, secondly, we must be replenished with the *love* of Christ, otherwise we shall be wanting in zeal, in courage, in strength and fidelity in this our imitation.

The clearer our knowledge of Christ is, the more fervent will be our love for Him, and the greater our desire to please Him, to be near Him, and, therefore, to follow His example with earnestness and perseverance.

But, alas! how great is the deficiency of the faithful in this respect! How wanting they are in the real knowledge of our Lord, in their true love for Him, may be proven particularly by two facts!

The first is: The *presence* of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. He abides in the Church, in the tabernacle;—there He is really and truly present in our midst, as He was once present in Bethlehem, in Jerusalem, in the holy land, and as He now is enthroned on the right hand of His heavenly Father.

And yet, how very few think of this real presence of Christ on the earth! how very few visit Him during the day, although many live in the vicinity of a church, and have every opportunity of spending some time before the Blessed Sacrament!

If we desire to know Jesus, and to grow in this knowledge, we must approach Him, and carefully *observe* Him; He is still in our midst, and frequent visits to Him are the best means of increasing our fervor, and of encouraging us in His imitation.

But Christ does not only abide with us; He, more-

over, unites Himself to us in Holy Communion. And how sad the fact, that many manifest so little fervor in the reception of this Sacrament! The primitive Christians received our Lord daily, and in our times, the Christians needed a commandment to receive the Lord's Supper at least once a year!

It is not surprising that, under these circumstances, a great want of zeal is apparent in the imitation of Christ. There is a lack of that real knowledge and true love of Christ, which only those souls possess who are faithful and loving in their intercourse with Jesus, and who frequently unite themselves to Him in Holy Communion. These feel the truth of the promise of Christ: He that eateth of this bread shall abide in Me.

A soul that feels the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and often and worthily receives Him in Holy Communion, may justly exclaim: Jesus, my *thought!* If we wish to follow Christ, we must think of Him constantly. He must be our first thought on awakening, and by a good intention we must unite ourselves to Him, and offer to our heavenly Father, through Christ, all our thoughts, words, desires, and actions of the day!

A soul that has attained to the true knowledge of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, may in truth exclaim: Jesus, my *desire!* If we wish to imitate Him, we must be animated with this desire, which will possess us if we but unite ourselves to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

One who, actuated by this desire, worthily receives our Lord into his heart, may break forth in transports of joy and love, far more arduous than the longing of David: "What is there in heaven, or what do I desire on earth but Thee, Thou God of my heart?"—"Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee!"

A person who has attained to this real knowledge and love of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament may unhesitatingly acknowledge: Jesus, my *Model!* Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is the mirror wherein are reflected all those virtues, which, in our imitation of Christ, are of the utmost importance.

"And they watched Him;" thus we read of the Pharisees. They observed only the exterior actions and omissions of our Lord, and that without any intention of imitating Him.

One who has gained this knowledge and love of Christ, which His actual presence in the Blessed Sacrament imparts, will carefully and diligently observe the hidden life of Jesus in this Sacrament. He will observe His humility, His freedom from temporal cares, His silence, His uninterrupted prayer, His complete self-denial, and renouncement of all worldly enjoyments, His love for His heavenly Father and for mankind, His magnanimity and His generosity. These virtues, especially, effect in us conformity to Christ during our lives.

If our entire life shall be a following of Christ, we must in truth be able to say: Jesus, my only *care!*

and to strive, above all things, to know what we are to do, in order to please Jesus and to satisfy the longings of His Sacred Heart.

Jesus! what wouldst Thou have me do? I will do all for *love* of Thee,—Thou art my *consolation*, my *strength*, my *trust!*

Christians, thus our hearts must be disposed if we would earnestly follow Christ, be conformable to Him, and persevere to the end. And thus will the heart be disposed that knows how to profit by the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; who hastens to Him, remains with Him, observes Him carefully, and follows the Divine example which shines forth in the Blessed Sacrament.

Jesus Himself affirms: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall abide in Me, and I in him." And if this be the case with us we may acknowledge with St. Paul: "Christ liveth in me!"—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had the dropsy." —Luke 14.

WHAT sickness is to the body, sinful habits are to the soul. And, as there are numerous diseases which attack the body and endanger its life, so also there are various sins of habit—pride, covetousness, envy, anger, enmity, gluttony, lust, sloth—which may all be regarded as diseases of the soul, which endanger its spiritual life, and but too often destroy it by the loss of sanctifying grace.

Among all these different diseases of the soul, there is one especially which endangers its life, because it has but too many opportunities of attacking man, and because, after once having a firm hold, it can be expelled only with the greatest difficulty.

The dropsical man, of whom the Gospel of to-day speaks, is a figure of this sin of habit, namely; the inordinate use of spirituous and intoxicating liquors.

There are not only persons who suffer from an excess of water, but also those who suffer from the excess of wine, beer, whisky, and brandy; and how very difficult it is to cure them of this disease!

Give thanks to God, if you are not yet a slave to this vice, and in order that you may never have this misfortune, hearken to what I shall say to-day, that I may warn you effectually; and if you are already a

slave to this vice, listen, that you may burst the ignominious fetters of this vice, and be saved.

O Mary, thou who knowest how many souls go to ruin through this vice, especially in this country, grant, that if such a sinner be here present, I may bring him back to God, and induce him to amend sincerely!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

"Let your voice resound like a trumpet!" thus our Lord admonishes the prophets of the Old Testament, —to raise their voice against sinners, to warn them against sin, to encourage them to penance, to announce the judgments of God, and thus to bring them to an amendment of their lives, and to a reconciliation with God. But this call of the Lord has gone forth still more urgently and emphatically to the promulgators of the Word of God in the New Testament, to the successors of those, whom God sent not to one nation alone, like the prophets, but to all nations of the earth, as successors to the Apostles.

In compliance with this duty the Word of God resounds through the whole world for eighteen hundred years, instructing, warning, threatening, encouraging, and consoling. It is directed against every vice, against every sin; but there is one special vice, against which every pastor must raise his voice repeatedly, because it is so widely spread and so destructive, capable of bringing to naught all the efforts of the pas-

tor in behalf of the souls intrusted to his care. This vice is intemperance.

I will to-day raise my voice, and let it resound like a trumpet, that, with the assistance of God, I may, on the one hand, effectually warn him who has not yet fallen a victim to this vice, to beware of it, lest, through a want of aversion for it, or by the seducing influence of others, he may become addicted to it, as it unfortunately happens at times, even at an advanced age; or, on the other hand, to exhort to penance and amendment, him who has already become its slave, that he may courageously and resolutely burst the fetters with which Satan has chained him, perhaps for a number of years.

And here the question might be asked, Against what kind of intemperance do I speak? I do not denounce the moderate use of those beverages which God has intended for the refreshment and nourishment of man, such as wine, obtained from the juice of the grape, beer, or cider. These are nourishing drinks, of which man may partake, in as far as is conducive to his health. Every one who has attained a certain age, and who feels the need of a strengthening drink, may partake of these beverages.

I say, when he feels the need of it. For as long as a person is still young, he would do well to accept my advice, which is founded on personal experience, and quench his thirst with a cooling draught of water, or other drink not spirituous. By doing this, you will best provide for good health, and in old age you will

really derive strength from the use of wine or other drink.

As regards wine, beer, or cider, only those persons must abstain who are already drunkards, and who can not longer partake of them moderately; who can not taste them without at once yielding to temptation, and drinking to excess.

There is but one remedy for such, and they will employ it if they are really in earnest about the salvation of their body and soul, and that is, to abstain from all intoxicating drinks.

Any one who partakes of wine, beer, or cider moderately, is allowed to do so. It would be an outrage and absurdity to affirm the contrary. Christ Himself drank wine, as Holy Scripture testifies; and those temperance apostles of America, who forbid all use of wine, and preach against it as sinful, are simply fanatics.

But there is a vast difference between these drinks and distilled liquors. These do not quench the thirst, neither do they afford nourishment or strength. They stimulate a person in the most injurious manner. In case of sickness they may at times be taken as medicine; but no one should accustom himself to use them freely, as so many unfortunately do, thereby ruining their body and soul.

Against these drunkards, as well as those who use wine or beer to excess, do I raise my voice, and beseech you: If you value your health, your life, your honor, your property, your domestic peace, your soul,

your eternity,—abstain; conquer yourself, make a solemn promise, keep it faithfully, and save your body and soul.

Were I to enter into the details on all these points, to prove their truth, I might find material for many sermons. I will to-day but briefly remark: If you value your health, abstain from the use of all distilled liquors, and moderately use those drinks that are allowed. There is not the slightest doubt that intemperance destroys health, and injures the nervous system. Intemperance causes man to grow old before his time, and very often cuts him off in the prime of life. If you esteem your honor, avoid intemperance, for as soon as a person bears the reputation of a drunkard, his honor is gone. His money, too, will soon be gone. Among a hundred impoverished families, we will find eighty-five who can ascribe their want to the intemperance of its head.

Domestic happiness has fled. Among a hundred families wherein dissensions between husband and wife are common, the cause in at least eighty-nine will be the husband's intemperance. And how much more disgraceful if the wife is addicted to this vice!

Finally, if you value your soul and eternal welfare, do away with all liquors, for as experience teaches, this vice causes man to become the worst of sinners. It happens very seldom that a drunkard is permanently cured; and if you wish sincerely to amend, then, above all things, avoid the occasion of sin, cost what it may. Avoid those who have been your associates; do not

enter ale-houses, or only in case of extreme necessity. Do not stow such drinks away in your cellar.

The expression of Christ: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," may justly be referred to the drunkard. If you do not use violence, you will be lost.

Conquer yourself; abstain, and you will regain health; you will live long and happy, and in heaven you will one day thank me for this exhortation! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"When thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place."—Luke 14.

THE Pharisees, as the Gospel remarks, entering the dining-hall, watched Jesus. But they could detect nothing that was deserving of censure in Him, the divine Model of all virtues, the Redeemer of mankind; nothing that might have justified even a shadow of reproof. They held their peace.

Christ, on His part, observed them, and gave them the reprimand they so well deserved.

The Evangelist says: "Jesus spoke to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them: When thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place."

The reason which our Lord gave for it is one which every person, prompted by human wisdom alone, would be ready to accept without any further consideration. But Jesus closed the parable with a warning which has reference not only to the festive board, but to our whole life, saying: "Because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

How necessary and important is it, therefore, that every one, who wishes to live and die as a Christian, reflect upon these words of Christ, and resolve to quell every emotion of pride and self-esteem!

We will to-day consider the motives for doing so,

and will endeavor to understand the loathsomeness of pride.

O Mary, humble handmaid of the Lord, thou who wast raised to the highest dignity on earth and in heaven, because thou didst humble thyself before God, obtain for us the humility of thy heart!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God!

St. Francis de Sales was wont to say: "If I knew that there was still one fiber of pride within me, I would eradicate it, cost what it may." What filled this saint with such a horror for the vice of pride? We shall see presently.

The better to understand the reasons for shunning this vice, we will consider, in the first place, in what it consists.

Pride is that pernicious tendency of the human heart which causes man to give to himself the honor that is due to God. We can at once perceive the perverseness and malice of such conduct.

This perverse tendency of the heart, in its very nature, opposes the aim and end for which God has created this world, namely, His glory. This is the end of creation, and it could not have been any other, since God is the primeval, eternal cause, and is in Himself infinite perfection; therefore He could not have created the world for any other end than His glory.

God can, to some extent, share His goodness and blessedness with us; but all the honor and glory arising therefrom must ultimately be referred to Him.

We will readily perceive the malice of pride, when we consider the connection between pride and every other sinful propensity, and, in fact, every other sin.

Scripture says: "Pride is the beginning of all sin." This we can see at once, by remembering what constitutes a sin. Every sin is a willful transgression of the divine law, consequently a rebellion against God. For when committing a sin, man, by his actions, thus speaks to God: Thou commandest, but I will not obey; thou forbidst, but still I will trespass. What is at the bottom of this disposition but pride? For how could one truly humble ever dare to rise against God, and say, with the sinner: I will not serve Thee?

Therefore, if we earnestly desire not to offend God by any sin, we must combat with the firmness of St. Francis de Sales, and say: If I knew there was still one fiber of pride within me, I would root it out."

And we will the more readily do this, if we reflect upon the second quality of pride, namely: Its *absurdity!* We will understand the folly of this vice, when we consider the motives that prompt any one to exalt himself, and cause him to become proud. They are the accomplishments or excellencies which he imagines himself to possess, or does actually possess. The proud man imagines himself to be greater or better than another. Now, then, I say: These accomplishments are either *real* or only *imaginary;* the

latter is generally the case. The proud man has an idea that he has a clearer understanding of all things, or possesses more experience, or leads a better life, than any one else. He only imagines this; his self-love blinds him. All the world knows it; he alone is not aware of it, and exalts himself. He becomes inflated with pride, and is made the laughing stock of others.

But take it for granted that these accomplishments of which man boasts, and which cause him to exalt himself above others, are real. In this case the folly is seen still more clearly. For, as St. Paul says: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?" These talents or endowments are only so many trusts for which we owe thanks to God, and of which we shall one day be obliged to render a strict account. No one prides himself on his debts. The more distinguished the talents or prerogatives which a soul possesses, the more she should humble herself, remembering the warning of Christ: "Of him to whom much is given, much shall be demanded!"

All nature teaches, by her laws, how submissive we should be to God,—teaches us to humble ourselves the more if our gifts and graces are abundant.

How tiny the twinkling stars appear in the firmament, and yet they are such grand heavenly bodies. The air seems as nothing, yet it contains the elements of the whole world of sound, and by it the whole human race, the whole animal kingdom, breathes. Rain

falls but in drops; the golden sheaves bow towards the earth; and every fruit-tree sinks its heavily laden branches. Birds of rich plumage do not sing; but how enchantingly the lark pours forth its lay high up in air! how sweetly the nightingale warbles in the shady grove, and both are arrayed in simplest colors! The flowers whose perfume is sweetest, as the violet, bloom in obscure spots, and the most precious stones and metals lie buried deep within the earth.

And how much more ought man, of his own accord, humble himself before God; especially, if the graces and favors bestowed upon us by our Lord are marked and numerous!

The saints practised humility during their whole life.

The seraphic St. Francis was wont to style himself the worst of men; and he would frequently say: "O Lord, if others had received the graces which You have granted me, how much better and holier would their life have been than mine!" St. Teresa, St. Ignatius, and all the saints entertained the same sentiments.

But what, above all other things, should induce us to uproot this vice from our hearts, is the danger, the great danger, of perishing eternally.

Why was Lucifer and one-third of the angels hurled into hell? Pride was the cause of their downfall.

Need we any other inducements to humble ourselves than the earnest reflection upon the answers to these three questions:

Man, from whence do you come? You are made out of nothing.

And what are you? According to the flesh, you are a mass of corruption; as to your soul, you know not whether you are in the state of sanctifying grace or not. If not, you are an image of Satan.

Man, what will become of you? God will judge you. Meditate upon this frequently and seriously, and humble yourself! Amen!

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And one of them, a doctor of the law, asked Him, tempting Him, 'Master, which is the great commandment in the law?'"—Matt. 12, 36.

WITH what different dispositions did those of whom the Gospel tells us to-day that they sought to interrogate Jesus, approach their divine Master! Some questioned only to tempt Him, some through mere curiosity, while others asked from integrity of purpose and a sincere desire to know and comply with their duty. Many, and by far the greater number of those who stood by, neither questioned our Lord, nor cared for the instruction He would impart; for the all-important affair of their salvation was the one which troubled them least, as is still the case, alas! and will be while there are men to tread the earth.

Many there are who interrogate those divinely appointed to expound the truths of our holy religion, but it is only with a view to injure and bring disgrace both upon them and the faith they profess. An impossible undertaking, if they would but realize it! They question only to surprise the answers, to ensnare them in the meshes of some specious argument,

hoping thus to gain their malicious ends, as if the Church were not founded by Christ Himself, and fortified by the divine promise of everlasting protection.

Others, again, ask more through idle curiosity than with the intention of becoming truly converted to God, and serving Him faithfully for the remainder of their lives.

But, my brethren, as I have said before, far more numerous still are those who do not care to ask at all in what consists the great affair of salvation,—who eagerly inquire into the merits of earthly and transitory things,—but care not to inform themselves as to what is required by God for His faithful love and service in this life, that He may reward us with eternal happiness in the next.

That it may not be so with us, *let us take deeply to heart the answer of our divine Saviour in this day's Gospel, and consider why He gave such pre-eminence to that commandment which enjoins upon us the duty of loving God, resolving, at the same time, to observe it to the best of our ability, with the help of His holy grace.*

O Mary, queen of the seraphim, mother of fair love, pray, that we, like you, may find our greatest delight in complying with the injunctions of this great precept!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater glory of God!

"Master! which is the greatest commandment in the law?" and Jesus said to him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." Thus far the answer given by Christ, as we find it narrated in the Gospel of to-day.

Let us dwell for a moment upon the cause we have for surprise, that such a question should be put to Christ. It seems as if we all should know what was the first and greatest commandment. Nay, it seems strange that *love of God* should be imposed upon us by a special command. It seems strange to prescribe for us as a duty, what is so plain in itself, and to the fulfillment of which we are urged by motives so many and so powerful.

If St. Stanislaus Kostka, in his wonder at being asked if he loved the mother of God, exclaimed, in answer to the priest who interrogated him: "How could I possibly refrain from loving my dear mother?" Still greater cause has the faithful soul to cry out: "How could I do otherwise than love God, my Creator and Father, my Redeemer,—the supreme object and end of my existence,—the eternal source of my salvation?" And yet it is necessary that a command be imposed upon us to enforce the love of God. Oh, heart of man, what degeneracy has not the sin of our first parents caused in thee!

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." This, according to Christ, is the first and

greatest precept. It is the first and greatest, if we consider it in regard to its dignity—in regard to its obligation—in regard to its extent—in regard to its merits—in regard to its sweetness—and in regard to its necessity as well as the ease with which it can be observed. Let us briefly but earnestly consider the commandment under each of the preceding aspects.

It is the first and greatest in regard to its dignity, because its object is God Himself, Who is the infinitely perfect Being existing from all eternity.

It is the first and greatest when considered according to its obligation. How many, and what powerful motives to love God above all, rise up before us! Man naturally inclines to love and esteem whatever is good, beautiful and perfect, whether it be knowledge or power, virtue or holiness, justice or benevolence, truth or fidelity. How, then, could he withhold his love from a God, Who is infinitely good, infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely merciful, infinitely true, infinitely faithful, beautiful, and grand?

This commandment is the first and greatest, because man is susceptible of love and affection towards any one who bestows favors upon him. How, then, could he possibly refrain from loving a God to Whose bounty he is indebted for all that he possesses, and from Whom he hopes to receive infinitely greater benefits in a blissful eternity?

In the order of nature man owes a debt of gratitude to God for every gift of body and soul. Without Him he could not draw a single breath—his heart would

cease to beat,—through His goodness he receives food and clothing. In the supernatural order he owes God special thanks for many spiritual gifts and graces. How fitting, then, is it that we should, like holy David, marvel how we can thank the Lord our God for all He has given us! My brethren, God has already replied. What does He desire from each and every one of us, but the fervent love of our heart and soul?

This precept is the first and greatest in regard to its extent; for it embraces, as we know by the assurance of Christ and His Apostles, all the other commandments. Its intrinsic merit also places this precept above all others; for without it there could be *no* merit, as St. Paul asserts in these words: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

It is the first and greatest precept on account of its sweetness, because it demands of us to love *Love Itself;* and, therefore, it is also the first and greatest, on account of its very necessity; for we have the solemn assurance of St. John, the disciple of love: "He that loveth not, abideth in death."

But, my friends, we are expected to obey this precept in its fullest sense. And in what is that? The words of Christ furnish the reply: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God above all things, with thy whole heart." To love Him so as to be able to exclaim,

with truth: "O Lord, to Whom naught is hidden in the heart of Thy creature, Thou knowest that Thou art the supreme object of my love."

To love God with our whole heart, mind and strength, we must have no other love but Him, so that our lips may give utterance to the real sentiments of our hearts in the words: "O Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee above all things, with my whole heart and mind and strength, and that I have no other love but Thee. To this love I bring the three powers of my soul,—will, memory, and understanding. It shall influence all my actions, so that my life may indeed prove my love for Thee."

This would be loving God according to the admonition of St. John: "Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." We can fulfill this first and greatest precept in an especial manner in the performance of those duties which refer directly to God—as prayer—and acts of charity towards our neighbor for the love of God.

Yes, my brethren, the duty of loving our divine Saviour is sweet indeed; but let us not forget to prove our love by our daily actions, so that they may all tend to the greater honor of God!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." —Matt. 22, 39.

"THOU shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." To this commandment Christ has given the second place, and how forcibly does He recommend it by saying that it is like unto the first,—even like unto that precept which imposes upon us the obligation of loving Him! Could our divine Lord more emphatically express its importance, or more earnestly enforce our compliance with it? And why does he so highly extol this second precept, and connect it so closely with the first? Because this second commandment has its source in the first, and all the motives which urge and determine us to comply with it refer directly to our common end—God. Why this is so shall be made clear to you in this discourse.

Frequent and serious reflection upon the obligation of this precept is necessary for a twofold reason. First, because man is so often tempted to avail himself of specious excuses to neglect its observance; and, secondly, because there are constant occasions to transgress this commandment.

O Mary, mother of all true children of God, pray that, for thy dear sake, we may find true happiness in faithfully complying with this command of thy beloved Son!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

In regard to that commandment which our Lord pronounced the first and greatest, it can not fail to excite our wonder that, to observe what should be our joy to comply with voluntarily, has been imposed upon us as an obligation. The very thought of God, nay, the mere questions, "*Who is God?*" "*What am I?*" place before our mental vision, in a light clear as the rays of the noonday sun, that in such compliance we would find perfect peace and joy.

But it is very different with that precept which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. God is infinitely perfect, and all His relations towards us are as so many sparks, to enkindle in us the fire of divine love; while our neighbor, on the contrary, is an imperfect being, nay, but too often a being so corrupt that we have ample cause to censure his conduct and to shun his society. Yet the commandment remains in force: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The reasons for obeying remain the same, be the difficulties in the way of its fulfillment ever so great. That we may the more readily perceive, and the more willingly acknowledge, the truth of this, let us consider, in order, the various motives which should urge us to comply with this command.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Why? Because, like thyself, he has been created to the image and likeness of God. "Thou shalt love thy neigh-

bor as thyself." Why? Because, like thyself, he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Why? Because, like thyself, he enjoys the privilege of being a child of the one true Church. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Why? Because, like thou, he has been called to be, one day, a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem, and to dwell forever in the kingdom of eternal love.

Let us frequently call to mind these motives, and be ever ready to practise acts of charity, for they are most dear to our Lord, who assures us that whatever we do, even to the least of our fellow-men, He regards as done to Himself, and that He will reward us a thousand-fold.

Could we have a more powerful incentive to be kind and charitable towards our fellow-beings, than that our Saviour will accept and bless this love and kindness as if He were Himself the recipient?

Yes, my brethren, He even affixes to the fulfillment of this precept the security of our salvation, for we read in St. Matthew: "Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; naked, and you covered Me."

But, oh, what a fearful malediction is pronounced upon the miserable beings on the left! With angry

countenance the Judge of the living and the dead will say: "I was hungry, and you gave Me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me not to drink; . . . Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

Now, should you ask: "How are we to fulfill this precept in the most perfect way?" my reply would be: Listen to the words of Christ: "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." Your divine Master points out the way, when He tells us to act towards our neighbor as we would have him act towards us. What a golden rule for the practice of fraternal charity!

"Charity thinketh no evil." We wish others to recognize and extol our good qualities; let us not be unmindful of theirs. "Charity envieth not," but acknowledges with joy the existence of virtue in others, as the Apostle of Nations assures us: "Charity is kind." We frequently need the assistance of our neighbor; let us not be unmindful of his necessities. "A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city."

When the heart is heavy with the weight of some heaven-sent sorrow, oh, then the sympathy of a beloved friend is soothing to the heart. St. Paul understood this well, when he gave utterance to the words: "Who is afflicted and I am not grieved?"

We wish others to forgive us; let us, then, be forgiving, for Christ assures us that if we refuse pardon to our neighbor it will not be granted to us. We rejoice when some holy soul assists us in our efforts to

become holy; let us then manifest fraternal love by unwearied zeal in promoting the spiritual welfare of our neighbor.

From all that has been said, my brethren, we can easily perceive the meaning of the commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself;" and why our blessed Saviour tells us that by loving one another we are known as His children, and why St. Paul has affirmed that in the fulfillment of this obligation we fulfill the whole law.

It is because such a disposition is possible only when one loves God above all, and is firmly determined to fulfill His holy will.

When St. John, the Disciple of Love, whose constant theme was fraternal charity, and who never preached a sermon without imploring his hearers "to love one another," was asked why he spoke so unceasingly upon that subject, he replied: "Because, if you love thus, your lives will be in accordance with the whole law."

Yes, children of the Holy Catholic Church, fulfill this commandment wholly and entirely, and, in so doing, you will find the sanctification and salvation of your souls! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"What think you of Christ?"—Matt. 20, 42.

AFTER Christ had explained which commandment was the first and greatest in the law, and indicated the importance of loving our neighbor, it naturally followed that He should ask: "And what think you of Christ?" in Whom both natures are united in one, and in regard to Whom, therefore, the twofold law of love has but one and the same object.

Were Christ to-day to ask us—who, as children of the one true Church believe in Him—the question: "What think you of Christ?" every well instructed Christian would reply: He is the Son of God, made man; therefore He is my God, my Redeemer, my Brother, my Friend, the Spouse of my soul, and the Judge who is one day to decide my eternal fate. This confession would avail but little if unaccompanied by the love which we owe to Christ,—a love which must not be satisfied with mere professions, but must prove itself by an intimate union with Jesus, ever present in the adorable Sacrament of the altar.

The *devils* believe and tremble, yet they remain devils. *We* wish our belief to be a source of happiness for time and eternity, then let it be verified by love. Christ was not satisfied with asking Peter what he thought of Him—as when Peter, in answer, made that glorious confession of faith in Him as the Son of

God—but He afterwards directly interrogated this Apostle not only *once*, but *three times:* "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" And to each and every Christian assembled here He puts the same question. Oh, may we indeed with sincerity, and without self-deception, entertain an ardent love for the Lord our God!

We shall to-day consider this sign of true love for Jesus.

O Mary, who, as the mother of Jesus, didst love Him with an ardor and affection that only a mother can feel, obtain for us a true love of Jesus!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Our Lord asked Peter whether he loved Him, and the prince of the Apostles earnestly answered: "Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

My brethren, if Christ to-day were to appear visibly in our midst, and address the same question to us, we would doubtless reply with Peter: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" But are we fully justified in this answer? Peter added to His reply the words: "Lord, Thou knowest all things!" Could *we* say, "Lord, Thou who knowest all things, canst look into my heart and read what is written there!" Alas! I fear not. We may say to God, I love Thee, yet our daily lives reveal a different tale, and prove the answer false. St. John warns us of the danger of self-

deception in this regard, when he says: "Let us love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Let us then, my brethren, look into our hearts for a few moments, and see whether our love will bear the test.

The first characteristic of true love is that its presence in the heart must be *felt*. Behold the little infant! It twines its arms round its mother's neck, and kisses her with fond endearment, and thus, without ever having heard the word *love*, its little heart feels it in the tenderest manner. Therefore, if asked whether you love Jesus *truly*, question your heart as to what sentiments are excited therein when you think or speak of your Saviour. Can you, like St. Augustine or St. Bernard, find no joy in aught that contains not the sweet name of Jesus? St. Bernard, after the mere utterance of that holy name, often tasted a sweetness like honey on his lips. If you are thus affected spiritually, your love has stood the first test.

Yet not to be deceived by a mere sensible affection, let me present to your consideration the second sign of true love for God, and this is horror of sin! for naturally one shrinks from offending a person beloved. "Do you love me?" says a wife to her erring husband. "If I did not," is the reply, "would I have chosen you of all others as my wife?" Yet the midnight hour finds her lonely and sad awaiting his return from some noisy revel, where he tarries, heedless of the anguish he causes his suffering wife. All the

world indorses her doubts of the sincerity of his professions.

The third sign of true love consists in not only not offending, but also in doing all that we can to please the one we love. Thus a husband needs not to give his wife verbal assurances of his devotion if he anticipates her wishes, and tries to fulfill them whenever he can do so; for love reads in the eye the wish of the heart, and hastens to comply with it.

Is your love for Christ sincere? Examine the ardor of your efforts to imitate your divine model in the practice of those virtues which belong to your state of life. What testimony can your daily life produce that you earnestly strive to become holy according to the wish of your Saviour? Do you really try to follow in His footsteps? If so, you truly love Him; but if, on the contrary, you are content merely to avoid mortal sin,—if you comply with your religious duties merely through habit or human respect, then, my brethren, you love not in deed nor in truth, but in word only.

The fourth sign of true love is generosity. A Christian who does not assist another, or who only does so in some urgent necessity, does not display any great love. True love of Jesus must be magnanimous and self-sacrificing, ever ready, therefore, to co-operate with Him in His mission to the human race, which is the rescue and sanctification of souls. What says conscience on this point, my friends? Do you not only assist your neighbor in his temporal wants, for the

sake of Him Who assures us that whatever we do for the least of His creatures is as if done to Himself; but do you also labor according to your opportunities to draw souls to Christ, to promote their sanctification, to help them on the way of salvation? Perhaps you are not only wanting in this holy zeal, but, more deplorable far, your own life is not free from scandal. If so, you may indeed derive a certain satisfaction from the recitation of some beautiful prayer, while, with tears of sensibility, you declare your love for God, but no real love is there.

The fifth sign is a love of trials and sufferings. The Christian in whose life the cross has borne no part, whose days are passed in ease and luxury, has not the assurance that he is a real lover of Christ. Let the dark clouds of adversity envelop his soul in gloom, and if he come forth from the trial resigned to the will of Him Who first walked in the royal way of the cross, then may he call himself a true lover of the Crucified One.

A husband and wife can scarcely tell the depth and fervor of their love while life is bright and pleasant. If, when clouds obscure their path, and trouble overshadows their life, their affection remains as pure and ardent as before, then they may know that it is genuine and true.

So, if we love suffering, if we know how to carry the cross, it is a sign that we love Him Who died upon that cross.

Finally, one who loves never wearies of being with

the object of that love. Examine yourselves, my dear friends! How is it with your devotion to Jesus, hidden under the mystic sacramental vail? How often do you visit Him in his lowly tabernacle? How often do you receive Him in the most sweet sacrament of love? If you can say with truth, "I live only for Jesus, for my Saviour Who has declared that He has a burning desire to be honored by men in this adorable sacrament," then you are blessed indeed. But if your hearts manifest no attraction to abide with Christ, to be united with Him in the Holy Communion, then I must declare to you that your love for Him is neither fervent nor sincere! Amen!

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And the multitude glorified God that gave such power to men."—Matt. 9, 8,

AS the body is subject to disease, so also is the soul; but with the latter the malady is sin. Great analogy exists, however, between the two, for by sin infirmity entered the world; and if man had not transgressed the divine command, he would never have become a victim to fell disease, much less a prey to death. St. Paul says: "By one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned."

But Christ, although He assumed human nature, was not subject to this involuntary death, or to sickness.

Since He came into the world as Physician and Redeemer, it is clear why his power was manifested in so many instances in restoring the sick and afflicted. These corporal cures are types of the spiritual restorations accomplished by the priceless blessing of redemption. It is certainly to be believed that this power of occasionally healing diseases has been bequeathed by Christ to His Church, but a far more inestimable benefit has also been left by our divine Lord as a pre-

cious legacy to His children in that holy Church, viz.: *the infallible means which we possess at all times for the purification of our souls.*

O Mary, mother of mercy, obtain for us, from Jesus, the grace to approach frequently and worthily the Sacrament of Penance!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"And behold they brought to Him one sick of the palsy."

I have said that sickness is a punishment entailed upon us in consequence of the sins of our first parents, and that it is a type of sin. The truth of this last assertion we can easily perceive by comparing the characteristics of corporal illness with the condition of a soul in the state of mortal sin.

When sickness visits us, we are unable to fulfill our daily duties. Our body, indeed, is there—lying on a bed of pain; but its senses are dull and languid, our sight grows dim, we scarcely can hear! Tossing restlessly, burning with fever, we loathe the thought of food, and vainly long for rest. We feel that we are a burden to ourselves and to all around us; and this is the case, in a greater or less degree, with every sinner. The soul of the sinner is diseased; the peace of his conscience is disturbed by the thought of his guilt; he fain would sleep, that is, he longs to still its reproaches, but it is all in vain! He plunges into every

sinful pleasure; but, wearying of them all, cries out, in the fever-heat of passion: "Oh, for some new and untried pleasure! oh, for some spot where I could spend my days rioting in forbidden joys, where the lashings of conscience would not be felt! Oh, for rest!" But vain are such wishes. The sinner closes the eyes of his soul by despising and turning away from the truths of faith. He closes the ears of his soul by refusing to listen to those inspirations by which the Holy Ghost is ever seeking to call back the erring children of the Church. He heeds neither those loving whispers, nor dreads the thunders of divine justice. He hungers not for truth or virtue; the very thought of either is loathsome. All his yearnings are for sensual pleasures, which serve but to intensify the thirst of that heart which was created for God alone. He wavers; he seems to be at times sensible of his miserable state; he wishes to change his life, but his resolution is weak. He goes hither and thither, seeking different confessors; but soon relapses into his evil ways, so that his condition is worse than it was before. St. Ambrose is indeed right when he characterizes the diseases which afflict the sinner as avarice, pride, envy, wrath, impurity and tepidity. What a fearful category! Poor sinner, only One can help thee, Christ, who styles Himself the true Physician of our souls.

"Be of good heart, son; thy sins are forgiven thee." The one to whom these consoling words were addressed was sick of the palsy, a disease which is, in an especial manner, a figure of sin; for the sinner,

although keenly alive to his earthly interests, to which he devotes the three powers of his soul, in every thing that concerns his salvation is a helpless paralytic. The plainest truths, the most forcible admonitions, the most terrible threatenings, are alike powerless to touch his hardened heart! Nay, the very instructions in his holy faith, to which, when an innocent child, he listened, seem to have vanished like a dream.

Oh, sinner, pray to God that He may restore that heart, so deaf to the pleadings of divine grace; and direct the energy of that will, now so depraved, to do His holy will. Sometimes you are sensible of the miserable state into which you have fallen; and it may be the last call which God, in His infinite goodness, will give you! Oh, let not His mercy he unheeded!

My dear brethren, remember the words of Christ to the man sick of the palsy: "Son, be of good heart, thy sins are forgiven thee." Words full of consolation, and constantly repeated in the Sacrament of Penance. It is an article of faith that all sins, be they ever so heinous, or the number ever so great, can be forgiven by means of this Sacrament, if the penitent approach it with proper dispositions. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church—the forgiveness of sins." We make this declaration when we repeat the Apostles' Creed, and it is to be remarked that therein no mention is made of any power granted by Christ to His Church, *except* the forgiveness of sins. Would it were in my power to gain the ear of every Protestant in the

land, that by one single argument I could prove to them that their Church is not the one true Church, and that they are deceived, indeed, in thinking so. My Protestant friends, if you are conscious of sin, and, with its weight heavy upon your soul, you seek your minister with the question: "Can you, in the name of God, forgive me my sins?" they all reply: "I can not; you must go to God alone; you must help yourself." What would be my reply, if I were a Protestant? "What, you the minister of my religion can do naught for me when I have transgressed the law of God? of what benefit is that Church to me? and what good do I derive from its existence, if I can obtain forgiveness and save my soul without it?"

Yes, the children of a fallen generation *do* need a Church, that one founded by Jesus Christ Himself—a Church wherein can indeed be found the forgiveness of sins, whose ministers have exercised that power even from the time of the Apostles. We know that our divine Lord left this authority to His Church from the words He spoke to those Apostles, and, consequently, to their successors in the holy ministry: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven,—whose sins you shall retain they are retained,"—words which would have been destitute of meaning had not our divine Lord intended to express by them the obligation of confessing our sins to a priest. And because "until time shall be no more" men will be liable to commit sin, the power of forgiving sin has been granted also to the successors of the Apostles,

the bishops and priests of the Holy Catholic Church, and is constantly exercised over the whole earth.

Pope Clement, disciple and successor of St. Peter, as early as the first century, wrote to the faithful in Corinth, praying them, for God's sake, to confess their sins, that the priests of the Lord might absolve them. St. Cyprian uses almost the same words. Tertullian, in the second century, admonishes Christians of the necessity of an entire confession of their sins, and compares one who conceals his sins in the Sacrament of Penance to a patient who, through shame, refuses to confide in his physician, preferring rather to die of some secret malady than to overcome this false shame and be healed. Irenæus, Basil, Origen, Leo, Chrysostom and Augustine speak in the same manner regarding confession and the frequent recourse to it. Had not this Sacrament been instituted by Christ, it would have been known precisely at what period Christians began to confess. As it is, no one can fix a time—a proof that the practice existed from the very beginning. And, my dear brethren, we have great reason to praise God and to marvel that He intrusted this wonderful power, not to angels, but to the bishops and priests of His Church, who are but men.

Would to God that all children of the Church would avail themselves of this Sacrament for their eternal salvation, and take heed lest they abuse it to their everlasting condemnation! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee."—Matt. 9, 2.

HAPPY he who was so favored as to hear those consoling words from the divine lips of Christ; but equally happy is the Christian who receives from the priest in the tribunal of penance the assurance that his sins are forgiven. This assurance is given whenever the confessor absolves a truly repentant sinner.

St. Augustine's words, in regard to baptism, apply also to the Sacrament of Penance: "Peter baptizes, Judas baptizes, Christ baptizes." The power of absolving does not depend upon the merits of the priest, but upon the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, customary for the priest, after absolution, to say to the penitent: "Go in peace; thy sins are forgiven thee."

But is he sure of this? Has the priest the right to give the sinner this sweet assurance? Yes, if it be a repentant sinner; it depends entirely on his interior disposition. Too often, perhaps, he could, with greater justice, say: "Poor sinner, would that I could bid thee be of good heart, feeling that thy sins are forgiven, but, alas, I dare not!"

O Mary, obtain for us the grace to approach the Sacrament of Peace and reconciliation with such con-

trition, that we may deserve to hear those sweet words of peace and forgiveness!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Confession is an essential condition for the valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance, according to the doctrine of the Church: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." How could the confessor exercise this power were the penitent to refrain from confessing his sins? Man knows his own interior, and he must manifest it to those appointed by the Church. No one else can do it for him, because appearances are deceptive.

Confess, my dear friends, with all sincerity to the minister of God; for, regarded even in the light of reason, it is most salutary. Is it not most fitting that man,—rebellious man, who dares to transgress the law of his Creator,—should humble himself to the dust before that Creator?

In a severe illness no patient is permitted to be his own physician, and in the adjustment of the worldly disputes no one is allowed to decide his own case. Now, one in the state of mortal sin is spiritually sick, the priest is the physician of the soul, therefore to him should the malady be disclosed.

Being a sinner, he is guilty in the sight of God; he is a criminal and inclined to excuse himself; he dare not be criminal and judge at the same time.

How appropriate, therefore, and just is it not, that Christ obliges us to undergo the humiliation of confession!

Leibnitz, one of the most profound thinkers among Protestants, gave testimony of the excellence of this Sacrament when he declared that the practice of confession, as it exists in the Catholic Church, is divinest of the divine.

Even heathens, as Seneca, have testified to the happiness of having a friend to whom the inmost recesses of the heart might be unvailed; but where could be found the friend in whom we would be willing to place such confidence? Would not the friend have also a confidant to whom he revealed our secret?

My brethren, in the confessional sits one who guards until death the tale of sin and sorrow poured into his patient ear. Children of the one true Church! thank your Creator for that inestimable treasure, the Sacrament of Penance. Too often, alas! the efficacy of this means of salvation is lost. And why? Entirely through the fault of the penitent, who does not comply with the conditions necessary for its valid reception!

Some go to confession because a precept of the Church obliges them to do so at least once a year. But to such Christians, confessing as they do through constraint, and neither to increase sanctifying grace in their hearts, nor to secure themselves against relapses, the priest scarce ventures to say: "Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee."

If the penitent desire to hear those words, he must

first earnestly and carefully make the proper preparation for confession, otherwise the reception of the Sacrament, far from being a means of reconciliation with God, will bring on the soul the additional crime of sacrilege!

Yes, too often the confessor has reason to doubt the validity of the confession he has been called upon to receive. That *you* may avoid the danger of a sacrilegious confession, I will point out some of the causes of that terrible misfortune!

In the first place, humility of heart is wanting, and the preparation is begun without the necessary invocation of the Father of light, for grace to know our sins.

Secondly, instruction is wanting. Many do not accuse themselves of their sins as they should, on account of ignorance, confessing frequently as a venial fault, or no fault whatever, what is in reality a mortal sin.

Thirdly, the proper examination of conscience is wanting. People, indeed, go to confession, but do not take time to look into their hearts, or search carefully into the motives of their actions. Again, they confess what they *did*, but not what they thought and desired; unmindful that there can be, and *are*, mortal sins, both of thought and desire. They confess their sins of commission, but do not think of what they are obliged to do under pain of mortal sin, but have left undone. How many confessions of parents are null and void for this reason! They do not accuse themselves of

their negligence in bringing up the children whom God has intrusted to their care; they forget to say that they have not punished them when necessary, that they have not set them a good example. They confess their sins of commission, but pass over those of omission, in the sacred tribunal, as trivial indeed. Many, too, in confessing their sins, fail to say how many souls were led astray by the evil influence of those sins. Many confess their sins, but are silent as to the circumstances, which often materially affect the malice of the offense; as, for instance, in regard to the person with or against whom a sin was committed. It is, therefore, often difficult for the confessor to understand the nature and quality of the transgression.

Lastly, the penitent, in his declaration of sins, frequently omits to say how often each sin has been committed.

But the requisite most generally wanting, in the preparation for confession, is exciting the heart to true contrition. This may be obtained by dwelling on those motives which faith suggests for our consideration. The sign and seal of true repentance is a firm and well-kept resolution not to fall again into the sins which a thorough examination of conscience has revealed to us.

Confess your sins sincerely, my brethren, and answer whatever questions may be put to you by the confessor, who but too often has to complain of an unwillingness on the part of the penitent to do so.

What sorrow must overwhelm the priest when he sees no reason for those words of hope: "Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee!" when he fears that the penitent remains afflicted with his spiritual malady, and that instead of rising after the reception of this Holy Sacrament, perfectly restored, he rushes onward to eternal death!

THIRD SERMON.

"Why do you think evil in your hearts?"—Matt. 9, 4.

OUR divine Saviour, penetrating to the inmost recesses of the hearts of those around Him, condemned the evil He saw therein. And as His enemies treated Him in ages past away, so now do they malign and vilify His Holy Church. She, nevertheless, opens her arms to them, and is ever ready to assist them in their spiritual necessities, especially if that most direful of all evils—sin—weighs heavily upon them!

And even in regard to man's temporal happiness she has a fostering care, seeking not only to promote the welfare of nations, but the prosperity of families and individuals. But the world, "which thinketh not in its heart," looks askance at her, censures and calumniates her, and accuses her of machinations and intrigues of which she never dreamed!

All this betokens a degree of malice so great as to afford but little hope of leading the votaries of that world to walk in the path of truth and salvation!

This disposition is the ratification of what St. John complains when he says that men love darkness better than light, and it may also be considered as a mark of reprobation. It is a lamentable fact that Protestants, although they have been refuted hundreds, nay, thousands of times, still hurl their calumnies at

the doctrines of the Church, especially the doctrine of *Indulgences*. If such traducers, my brethren, love falsehood and the darkness of error more than the clear light of truth, it is beneficial—nay, essential—for Catholics to be well instructed on that point, that, when a fitting occasion presents itself, they make use of their knowledge.

I shall explain, therefore, to you to-day, what the Church teaches in regard to indulgences which she grants to all true penitents.

O Mary, most pure and immaculate, obtain for us the grace, that we may gain many indulgences, and gratefully appreciate their wonderful efficacy!

I speak in the holy name of Jesus, to the greater honor of God.

"And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee." By these words our divine Saviour points out the condition we should be in to profit by the means of reconciliation with which He has so mercifully provided us, that it may really and indeed tend to the salvation of our souls. Oh, what light, grace, strength and unction do we receive from divine faith! The more brightly it burns in our hearts the more clearly will we realize our obligations as Christians, and our transgressions against them; the more strongly we are confirmed in faith, the more forcibly do we perceive the magnitude and atrocity of sin, the greater

the care we take in the examination of conscience, and the firmer our resolution to avoid the sins which we have discovered. The more lively our faith, the more fervent our contrition, the more earnest our determination to make a good confession, to perform our penance, and to avail ourselves of the means which Christ left to His Church to blot out the temporal punishment due to sin after the guilt has been remitted, viz: *Indulgences.*

What is an indulgence? Ah! here is the spot at which our separated brethren aim their direct thrusts; here is the point around which their most odious calumnies cluster. But we need not wonder at that, since the originator of Protestantism,—Martin Luther,—charged our holy Church with abuses, committed by individuals, finding therein a favorable opportunity to effect his separation from the one true fold. And what right had he to fasten upon the Church what had been done by individuals, even if the culprits were bishops and priests? We can abuse every thing if we are maliciously inclined, even the Holy Sacraments, but the Church is not to be censured on that account. She bitterly deplores any abuses or wrongs, which may be committed by wicked and sinful men who call themselves Catholic, and claim to be members of her communion.

In what terms, then, my brethren, is this doctrine of indulgences expressed? How is the right to grant them proved? and what spiritual benefit do they produce?

An indulgence is the remission of temporal punishment due to sin after the guilt has been remitted. Thus has the Church declared, through the Council of Trent,—a declaration also supported by the testimony of Holy Writ. It is a commutation of a longer penance for a shorter, and hence it is styled an *indulgence*, or favor granted us. Thus an indulgence, to gain which the penitent must be in the state of grace, has nothing to do with the pardon of sin, but only with that debt of penance which must be discharged after the guilt has been remitted, as in the case of King David, where we have proof for this assertion. Holy Scripture records that the Prophet Nathan, after the king's repentance, tells him that the Lord has taken away his sin, but warns him of the death of his child, and many direful evils which he would have to suffer on account of that sin—all of which were inflicted on the royal penitent!

That the Church has power to remit the temporal punishment due to sin, on certain conditions, and that the exercise of this power is most salutary to her children if they make use of indulgences according to the spirit in which she grants them, is an article of faith of which every well-instructed Catholic is fully aware.

And indeed every one must perceive the truth of it, if, from love of truth, and, uninfluenced by prejudice, he carefully examines into the proofs. I assert that the Church has this power from Christ, who says: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth."—

"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." Now, the influence of that power most unquestionably extends to every thing connected with the removal of sin and its consequences for time and eternity, otherwise the power would be incomplete.

It is in the most plain and unmistakable manner that Christ has bequeathed to that Church which he founded for the salvation and sanctification of souls, this divine gift: "As the Father has sent Me, so also I send you."—"Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Mark it well! He says: *Whatsoever*. Now, one who can perform the greater act can also perform the less important. If the Church can, through Christ, remit all sins, no matter how numerous or heinous, it follows that she can do as much in regard to their punishment; for it is a maxim of the schools, that whoever can perform the greater, can perform the lesser act included in it.

By "*whatsoever*," as above quoted, Christ of course implies the remission of the temporal punishment, and so the Apostles understood it; for St. Paul granted to the incestuous Corinthian, an indulgence to be of avail for time and eternity. It was granted, my brethren, in accordance with the spirit of the Holy Catholic Church during the very earliest ages of her existence by bishops and priests. The practice existed in the time of St. Cyprian, when Christians, who had fallen away during the persecutions, were reconciled with the Church. Yes, my friends, the power of that Church on this point, so calumniated by Protestants, can not

be questioned, no more than can the certainty that indulgences are most salutary and saving!

To gain an indulgence, we must first be in a state of grace, or if we are so unfortunate as to have committed mortal sin, we must have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance. An indulgence, then, will enable the repentant sinner to enter heaven sooner, and come into the enjoyment of the beatific vision. Oh, what an inestimable favor!

Protestants, then, when they assert that an indulgence is a license to commit sin, utter one of the most vile calumnies pronounced by the tongue of man; for unless the aspirant, after an indulgence, be not purified from sin by a sincere confession, there can be no thought of his gaining that favor!

A calumny, similar in malice, if not even more grievous, is that oft-repeated one, that the Church barters indulgences for money. She may, indeed, prescribe the giving of alms as a salutary condition for gaining them; but that there is trafficking in so holy a matter is false indeed!

As regards the division of indulgences, they are of two kinds,—plenary and partial,—the names indicating the difference. The former obtains for the recipient an entire remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, in such a manner that whoever gains it, and receives the perfect application of it, becomes entirely pure in the sight of God; while the latter remits only a part of the temporal punishment which man has incurred for sin, and which must be suffered either in

this life or in purgatory. The means of gaining an indulgence, most earnestly recommended by the Church, is the heartfelt utterance of one ardent act of love towards God, which, in union with the reception of the Sacraments, will be most efficacious.

Thrice happy the Christian who, through a pure and ardent act of love, obtains a plenary indulgence,—a grace which I fervently hope will be granted to each and every one assembled here!—Amen!

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son."—Matt. 22.

IN the Gospel of to-day we are told of a marriage-feast prepared by the royal father for his son. This parable manifestly has reference to heaven, for St. John in his Apocalypse expressly mentions the nuptials of the Lamb, Who is the Son of God made man, whose union with the Church triumphant is symbolically expressed in this parable of the marriage-feast. This triumphant Church in heaven is verily, and indeed the *one* same Church which Christ established here upon earth; in which we, if we live as her true children, have a foretaste of those pleasures and delights which we shall one day enjoy in their plenitude, forever, when invited to the marriage-feast of the Lamb in heaven. The certainty which we feel of this truth, and the sweet hope arising therefrom, may well dispose our hearts to follow the admonition of the Apostle: "If ye have arisen with Christ, seek ye the things which are above."

Thrice happy are those children of the Church who

properly appreciate the privilege they enjoy in belonging to her fold, who live so that they will one day enjoy in perfection the bliss they now participate in but partially.

The subject of my sermon, then, to-day will be the marriage-feast in heaven which has already begun on earth in the kingdom of the one true Church.

O Mary, queen of heaven, pray that the fruit of this meditation may be a clearer knowledge of how to become true children of thy divine Son!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

To realize that we, as St. Paul asserts, behold in part the joys of heaven as if "through a glass," and have already a foretaste of them, we need only consider what causes heaven *to be* heaven, and inspires the saints to sing forever the praises of the Lamb. To this our attention is directed by the different names by which heaven is designated.

Holy Scripture calls heaven *paradise*, that wonder of creation which God called into existence for His faithful creatures.

Of the beauty of this celestial paradise we can form no idea; but if we view even the charms of this fair earth in the light of faith, and behold in them so many marks of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, do we not feel disposed with holy David to cry out: "The heavens declare the glory of God?" We learn

from the life of St. Ignatius how powerfully his heart was moved by the sight of the firmament, brilliant with stars to do all for the greater honor and glory of God. So, too, upon beholding lovely and fragrant flowers the heart of this great servant of God was elevated to his Creator. But what words can I find to portray the spiritual beauty of the holy Catholic Church,—rather, should say, to convey some faint idea of it? How infinitely more lovely does she appear in the eyes of the children of God, in the grandeur and magnificence of her heavenly attributes, than that terrestrial paradise which our first parents found so fair. By those ever-flowing streams of grace—the Holy Sacraments—by the good works perpetually budding and ripening in her garden, she is indeed rendered "all fair," and in her "there is no spot!"

According to the expression of Holy Scripture, heaven is the *promised land*, our *true country*, that home where loved ones meet to part no more. Oh, what happiness in the very thought!

Already we have a foretaste of this sweetness if we are so fortunate as to live near some holy souls, or if, after a long separation, we meet again some of God's faithful servants.

The Church, like heaven, is also our true country, and her children feel at home in her, be it in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, or Oceanica,—every-where the priest's "Dominus vobiscum" falls as sweetly upon the ear as when heard from the altar in the home of our youth.

According to Holy Writ heaven is a kingdom of *delight*, where naught but joy can enter; so also is the Church a kingdom of delight to those who keep her commandments. Hear the call of the Apostle: "Rejoice, I say, in the Lord; and again I say, rejoice!" To those who love God every thing works unto good, and is therefore a source of joy. The heart of the true Catholic has every reason to rejoice and be glad. How could he be otherwise, remembering the infinitely great grace bestowed upon him? What constant opportunities he has of acquiring merits and treasures for heaven, and multiplying them a thousand-fold! In this vale of tears, where all is transitory and fleeting, we often have troubles which almost crush the heart. Then think, O friends! of that weary road to Calvary which your suffering Saviour trod for you, and mark it well that sorrows, patiently borne, will one day change to celestial joys. Every Christian, in the state of grace, and living in union with God, can enjoy that sweetness and delight of which our Saviour speaks when He says: "My peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you!" a peace, my brethren, which the world knoweth not, and which hath not entered into the heart of its votaries to conceive. We know that eye hath not beheld the joys of heaven, nor ear listened to its ravishing strains of music, neither can the heart of man imagine the delights which God hath prepared for those who love Him.

These words apply also to the spiritual joy which is the portion of the faithful, devoted child of the Holy

Church, and to the utter ignorance of the worldling in regard to those joys. Yes, the Church is a kingdom of delight, to which can truly be applied the words of St. John: "And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband." "And I heard a voice, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people, and God himself with them shall be their God. And God will wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Whether it be sickness, or the loss of temporal goods, or some bitter humiliation, or the death of a beloved child, the true Christian accepts all as coming from the divine hand, uniting his will with the most holy will of God, ready to sacrifice, if necessary, even life itself, and yet to say, with St. Paul, "we suffer tribulation, but are not distressed."

Heaven is the *reward* offered for a holy life, and even here the zealous Catholic experiences the joy of this reward in proportion as his merits increase, and he advances in piety and fervor, walking in the way of the saints. New graces are bestowed upon him as his union with God becomes more intimate, and Christian hope sweetly whispers to his heart that heaven is near.

And God will be our portion forever in that happy home! Heaven itself would not be heaven were it not that there we will enjoy forever the presence of God. There, too, we will be with the immaculate

mother of God, and the angels and saints to share forever in their joys. Those same bright spirits surround us here, and we live in the midst of many holy souls who are doing the will of God upon earth, while the saints in heaven will one day welcome the deserving ones to their blissful home.

On earth we are especially near to the sweet mother of God in this kingdom of His Church, and how often do we not experience her maternal protection! But, more than all, the saints in heaven are not nearer to the king of heaven than we, and they can hardly possess Him more fully than we do by union with Him in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh, if we fully appreciated the happiness of this union with Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament, we would comprehend why the Scripture speaks of heaven as a *banquet*, for which the table is already prepared on earth! God is God every-where; He is present on our altars on earth as truly as in the grandeur and magnificence of his celestial throne.

To all, then, who truly live according to the spirit of the Holy Catholic Church, Christ fulfills His promise that He, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, will take up His abode in their souls.

Surely, most Holy Church, thou art heaven upon earth; and if we truly apply the graces we receive through Thee, then will we, as the Apostle assures us, live, while yet on earth, as if we shared the joys of heaven! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"But He was silent."—Matt. 22, 12.

GOD would not judge the world were He not just, on account of the angels. So St. Paul assures us. A remarkable expression! The sense of these words of the Apostle is that, were not all God's ways the ways of truth, and emanations from His infinite perfection, the angels—those beings of the highest intelligence and holiness—would discover the defect.

In this world the ways of divine Providence often appear dark and mysterious; but a day will come when that which is dark will be made light, and men will perceive that God condemns no one who, by his own fault and free will, has not deserved that fearful fate. On that day Lucifer, with all the infernal host, will be forced to confess and cry out that the Lord is just, and that just are all His decrees.

His justice will fall with terrible and crushing weight upon those sinners who, although members of the true Church, have abused the grace of God, and for that reason are condemned to eternal misery. Nothing is of more frequent occurrence on this earth than for those who have transgressed to find or invent some plausible excuse; but on that dreadful day, when Christ shall come to judge the world by fire, oh, then the sinner can find no plea or excuse, but will rather

cry out to the mountains to fall on him and hide him from the wrath of an angry Judge!

Let the subject of this day's meditation, then, be, how we can escape the terrible fate of the reprobate!

O Mary, whose sweet office of mediatrix will on that fearful day be ended, obtain for us the grace so to live that on the day of judgment we may turn to you with love and gratitude for having secured our salvation!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

It is natural for man to excuse himself. We, the fallen children of Eve, have learned the lesson well from our first parents, who not only sought to palliate their offense, but would fain have cast the blame upon their Lord and Maker. As it was with the world in its earliest ages, so it is to-day. Seldom do we find delinquents ready to acknowledge their faults, at least not in their entire magnitude; for if they do not exactly justify their evil doings, they palliate them as much as possible, and too often try to cast the blame upon others. But when Christ shall come to judge all men, that His justice may be vindicated before the whole world, there will be no room for excuses. Then he who has been an unfaithful child of the Church will not dare to break the awful silence which will reign while his evil life is being judged. When Christ shall have pronounced the awful sentence of condem-

nation, the wretched being will vainly call upon the mountains to fall upon him and hide his shame.

On considering the excuses most generally made for transgressions, we can readily see how there can be only silence before the Judge.

Listen to the first,—it is a plea of ignorance: "*I did not know.*" Sinner, Christian, would that excuse avail you on the last day? Christ would say to you: "What, sinner! you say you did not know? Did I not, from no merit of your own, create you, and make you a child of the true Church? Did not your parents, your teachers and confessors continually admonish you? Have you not listened to sermons which instructed you how to avoid sin? Yet you committed it over and over again! And what of the accusations of your conscience? did not they whisper that you were doing wrong—that you were outraging My adorable majesty? Did you not know that for the relapsing sinner there is no excuse? and yet how often and often you willfully fell back into sin! You advanced in age, and grew better able to discern the greatness of your offenses against Me, yet you would not give up those mortal sins! Can you deny it?" The sinner is silent!

The second excuse is: "*I could not help it.* I was tempted too strongly." Sinner, child of the Catholic Church! will this plea avail you at the judgment-seat of Christ? Far from it, for there you will be reminded of the numberless graces by which you could have resisted temptation, and fulfilled the most holy will of

God! You will be forced to recall the many inspirations of the Holy Ghost by which a loving Redeemer sought to touch your heart and strengthen your will! How, then, can you excuse yourself? Then will be placed before you the constant admonitions given you by your teachers, parents and confessor. You will be reminded of the power of prayer, which was within your reach, even as a child to ask and obtain grace to resist temptations. You will be reminded that, when you fell, there was the Sacrament of Penance, wherein you could obtain forgiveness and grace to amend!

If you consider that Lucifer and his rebellious angels committed but one sin, and received no grace to confess or repent, and then reflect on the numberless sins you have committed in the course of your life, in thought, word and deed, for which God has vouchsafed you both time and means of repentance, what excuse can you put forward? Cast but one glance at all the heathens, who for centuries have lived without the pale of the Church, not having had even for one single time the privilege of going to confession—a grace which you have despised and trampled upon, keeping away from the Sacraments perhaps for years, or approaching them in such dispositions as to bring additional guilt upon your soul! What plea can you find, O sinner, when the terrible voice of the Judge addresses you thus? "Was I not ever present in your Churches, where you, as a child of My Church, might have sought Me, to beg for the grace which it

would have been My joy to enrich you with?" O sinner, you will not dare to utter a word!

Another favorite excuse is: "*No one helped me.*" Do you think that will avail you with Christ? He will remind you of the guides in the way of virtue with whom you were blessed—your parents, teachers and the priests of His Church, who warned you and were ever ready to help you. He will remind you that He was always ready to enter your heart, and strengthen you with His sacred body and blood. He will tell you that you might have visited Him in His tabernacles, and drawn spiritual strength from the sweetness of His presence; but that you passed His abode unheeded, allowing months and even years to pass without receiving Him in Holy Communion, or approaching the holy table, merely through habit! O sinner, how terrible will be that silence in which you will stand before the Judge!

It is frequently urged: "*I was forced to do so.*" What will such an excuse avail you then? You are free, and neither man nor devil has power to make you commit sin, if you call upon God and firmly resist.

"*No one advised me*, and I saw *others* commit the same sin, while I was too young to know its evil." That excuse may pass in this life, but not in the next. Christ would say: "Had you not the warnings and threats of divine faith? They were often repeated to you, and you knew that a judgment awaited you after death, and that, if death surprised you while in a state of mortal sin, you would be lost forever!

If it had been a question of earthly danger, what care you would have taken! Had you been walking along a precipice, how cautiously you would have proceeded! If a dangerous illness had overtaken you, what efforts you would have made for the restoration of your health! If your temporal possessions were lost or injured, how solicitous you would have been for their recovery!

And what of the excuse of youth,—too young? Did you not persist in your evil habits long after youth had passed? The evil examples of others—will that have any value? If that led you away, had you not models of holiness in all the saints, whom you might have imitated? Above all, was God not ready to bestow sufficient grace upon you for salvation, even at your last breath? But you despised His mercy; you must accept the rigors of His justice!

And the wretched sinner, the lost and miserable child of the Catholic Church, will be silent before his Judge; but for all eternity his cries of despair will resound through the terrible abyss of hell! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Many are called, but few are chosen."—Matt. 22, 14.

OUR holy mother, the Church, has uttered many threats to the children of men, warning them of the certainty of a final judgment. But among them all there is none more powerful than that by which the Gospel of to-day is concluded. These terrible words: "Many are called, but few are chosen," serve to remind the Christian of the constant danger in which he lives, of not being one of the chosen few.

Christ speaks of those who are lost as by far the greater number, when He utters this threat through His Church!

Therefore, those who are in earnest about their salvation will ask with the Apostles, when they heard the fearful prediction that one of them would betray our Lord: "Is it I, O Lord?" No one knoweth. Christ does not return a direct answer, but each one can examine his own heart, and discover within himself whether he bears any of the marks of the elect.

Let us, then, to-day, carefully consider what are those marks and characteristics of the elect.

O Mary, mother of celestial hope, cast over us the mantle of thy maternal protection, that we may live so as to be among the chosen few!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Holy Scripture assures us that no one knoweth whether he is worthy of love or hatred; and the Church, through the Council of Trent, teaches as a dogma, that no one, without a particular revelation, can possess certainty of his salvation. St. Paul, speaking of himself, says: "But I chastise my body, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway;" and in another place he tells us that his conscience does not reproach him, but that "it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God, before whom even the angels are not pure;" and he admonishes all: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

But to a *very* few of the saints has been granted, by revelation, a previous assurance of salvation, and the uncertainty of their election has caused many who are now among the most glorious of the celestial host,—as St. Bernard,—to tremble lest they might not be saved. Nevertheless, my brethren, Christ has given us certain signs and tokens from which we may form some idea of our spiritual state, and how it will be with us on the day of final judgment. I will direct your attention to those virtues so highly extolled by our Lord and Saviour, that He called their possessors blessed.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." If any one tries to detach his affections from the empty honors of this world, and to prevent his heart from being taken up with its perishable goods,—if he never omits an act of duty

or piety for the sake of temporal gain, he will certainly be rewarded eternally!

Are you really detached from the goods and possessions of this world? Do you sincerely try to cultivate this poverty of spirit? Let your own conscience answer; and if it tell you yes, oh, then indeed it is well with you; for you have the words of Christ Himself, that "of such is the kingdom of heaven!"

"Blessed are the meek." Thus speaketh our Lord. Have you the right to claim any part of this benediction? Look into your hearts and find the answer there! Do you cultivate a meek and gentle spirit, carefully shunning every thing that would wound the feelings of your neighbor? Then you possess one of the marks of election; for Christ Himself has pronounced you blessed.

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." The soul that, for pure love of Jesus, continually mourns for having offended Him, and also for all the sins by which God is continually offended, has every reason to hope for salvation. Of such souls it has been said that "they sow in tears, but in joy gather up the harvest of their merits."

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall be filled." Happy indeed is the Christian whose daily walk is in the way of penance,—whose earnest desire is to know and love God, and to do His holy will in all things,—who praises Him in His justice as well as in His mercy. Yes, he may indeed look forward to a happy eternity; for only in

heaven will he find what Christ has promised. He possesses one of the signs of election.

"Blessed are the clean of heart." Yes, blessed indeed are those who are free from the least willful sin against the angelic virtue of purity! They can, even on earth, anticipate the joys of heaven; for to them our divine Lord has promised the bliss of beholding Him in a blissful eternity. "Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God."

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." Precious to the most sacred Heart of our Lord are those of His children who are compassionate and merciful to their suffering fellow-creatures. They possess one of the surest marks of election, since to them will be addressed those words of benediction: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

This applies also to those who, with true zeal for souls and ardent love of God, assist their neighbor in his spiritual necessities. Whoever saves the soul of his neighbor works efficaciously for his own salvation; whoever is zealous in his efforts to bring our separated brethren into the bosom of the Holy Catholic Church, and does all in his power for the sanctification and salvation of souls, may, with loving confidence, feel sure that the Lord will not cast him off on the day of judgment, when those souls, restored to grace through his prayers and good works, enter bright and glorified into the kingdom of eternal hap-

piness. The Lord will never be unmindful of what is done for Him, especially in the way of saving souls, whose redemption was purchased by His precious blood!

"Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God." Well is it for you, dear Christians, if your hearts are free from bitterness and rancor,—if you love your neighbor,—if you forgive him as you hope to be forgiven,—if you strive to banish envy from your hearts, and seek occasion to heal the dissensions of those around you. Then may you hope to enjoy the bliss of heaven; for God has called you His "children," and a father is ever anxious to gather his children to his home!

"Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake." So Christ testifies. Yes; He not only promises to you a bright crown in the kingdom of eternal joy, but a reward beyond measure in that celestial home. "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Can we doubt that a member of the Holy Catholic Church, who is zealous in promoting the interests of religion, and ready to give up every thing,—riches, honors, even life itself,—for Christ; who hates the enemy of salvation, and strives to destroy his kingdom on earth, will one day participate, as a child of the Church triumphant, in the glorious victory of Christ over death and hell?

In general, my brethren, if you can truly say with St. Peter to our Saviour: "Lord, Thou who knowest

all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee;" if your heart is firmly united to the Heart of Jesus, and imbedded in it, so to speak, like a shell in the rock, surely you possess the mark of predilection.

A certain test of this, however, is the love and devotion you have towards Jesus, ever present in the adorable Sacrament of the altar, and the fervor you manifest in receiving Him frequently in Holy Communion. "Whosoever eateth this bread will abide in Me and I in him," and he will have life everlasting. These are the words of Christ Himself, our Creator and Redeemer, Who will one day appear to us as the Judge of the living and the dead!—Amen!

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"And there was a certain ruler, whose son was sick."—John 4, 46.

OF all the consequences of original sin there exists one which, without exception, is common to all the children of Adam, and that is, *death*. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned," says St. Paul. And again: "It is appointed for all men once to die." Almost as certain and universal as death, is its forerunner, sickness—a truth which daily experience teaches us. How many and what painful diseases are the portion of this poor mortal frame! Look at the long list enumerated in the physicians' report! Think how soon sickness puts in its claims on us; not only the aged and debauched, but innocent little children feel the power of its torturing hand, and even helpless babes can not escape.

If, instead of accepting these visitations as coming from God, we are inclined to murmur, let us reflect that they are sent not only to punish us for our manifold rebellions against a God to whom we are inbebted for every blessing, but also that we may gather a glo-

rious harvest of merits for eternity, by patiently accepting them in union with the most holy will of God.

Let us consider to-day with what disposition of heart we should bear each sickness which is sent us, that we may derive therefrom profit for the salvation of our souls.

O Mary, health of the weak, obtain for us the grace to employ our time, both in sickness and in health, to the honor of God and the salvation of our souls.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

The manner in which we bear sickness is of great importance, as we can see by the effects produced by it upon the mind. As man is composed of a soul and body, the latter, when enfeebled by illness, frequently influences the soul in a most injurious manner. The sick who are not blessed with the knowledge that in illness, as in health, God can be glorified, look upon such visitations with aversion and abhorrence, and only find in them occasions of murmuring against their Creator, and what they wickedly term His injustice. Many weary their attendants beyond measure, are guilty of sin by their impatience, and never give a thought to the duty of resignation to the divine will. Nay, some forget themselves so far as to break forth into curses at their affliction. Experience teaches, that even to the good and pious sickness is a sad trial, and one that severely tests their virtue. Thus, of holy Job,

Satan said to the Lord, that if He would but overwhelm that righteous servant with troubles and trials there would soon be an end of his piety and devotion. Even the saints have felt this effect of sickness. Witness the great St. Teresa. Having suffered from a violent fever, she says that she could never have believed that sickness would or could produce such a change in any one as she experienced in the course of hers. And we have all, no doubt, felt the same during illness. Persons who have been generally blessed with good health, and whose piety seemed so solid and fervent that nothing could weaken it, have, during an attact of illness, become so impatient, feverish and irritable that they could scarcely be recognized as the same. Therefore, is it not most advisable and reasonable to so dispose our souls during health that when our divine Lord, in His goodness, sees fit to afflict us with illness we may not repine, but receive it with patience? Otherwise we may increase the torments which, perhaps, await us at its termination in purgatory. Let it be your care, then, to meditate frequently upon the disposition in which you will accept the sickness which will certainly one day be your portion, and resolve to bear it with such resignation that those pains, so repugnant to our ease-loving nature, may, even more than the good works we can perform during health, tend to the sanctification of our souls.

Try, then, to bear with patience the pains of illness; the more severe the pain, the more fervently you can

offer it up to Him who suffered so much for you, and thus you will become most dear to the sacred heart of our Lord, sanctifying not only your own soul, but the souls of others also, by your good example.

To those who truly love God, every thing tends to promote their salvation, and this is especially true of sickness. Therefore, when the hand of the Lord is heavy upon you, and your enfeebled frame lies weak and powerless, lift up your heart, O Christian, in loving humility to your God, and accept the affliction, acknowledging that you deserve it all, and promise to endure it in atonement for your sins. Do not fail to renew this offering many times during the day, because the pains of body which prostrate you will tend to weaken those salutary dispositions of the mind.

In this penitential spirit you may also sweeten the bitterness of the remedies prescribed, thus turning them into merits for eternal life. Moreover, my dear brethren, you should look upon sickness as the forerunner of death; even though the disease may not be dangerous, it should prove a serious reminder and a powerful admonition. Say to yourself: "Before long my last illness may come, and how then will I wish to have spent my life?"

A sick person can not fail to realize how empty is every thing which has hitherto proved an obstacle in the way of his salvation—wealth, honor, the applause of his fellow-men. Those sensual pleasures which he has enjoyed so fully in health can not avail him on his sick-bed.

The great St. Augustine says that many a one would have gone on leading a sinful life had he not been interrupted by an attact of sickness. Then, what a real blessing such visitations must be if they produce the acknowledgment: "Vanity of vanities, all is but vanity save to love and serve God, and thus secure my own salvation."

In sickness a person can not labor as in health for the honor and glory of God; but he can, in another way, glorify God, viz., by submitting himself to the most holy will of God, by patiently bearing His sufferings, and by having the will, as well as the intention, to do good to his neighbor when he shall be able. Most acceptable to God is the practice of offering up the pains of sickness for the deliverance of the souls in purgatory, and for the conversion of sinners. Open the "Lives of the Saints" and you will see that it was in such a manner they endured the sickness with which God was pleased to visit them.

The sick should be particularly solicitous about their spiritual welfare, and take advantage of the time afforded them to attend to the welfare of their soul,—first, by receiving the Holy Sacraments not only once, but, if the sickness be prolonged, as often as possible; and, secondly, as soon as the physician shall have pronounced the malady to be dangerous, they should ask to receive the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, and, by heroic patience and endurance of pain, be to all around a bright example. Let sick persons, as the termination of their illness draws near, and the last

moments of life approach, try not only to resign themselves to the will of God, but to put themselves in such a disposition as to accept death *willingly*, and in the manner in which God, by this present illness, pleases to send it. All those Christians who, when sickness is sent to them, accept it in the manner above described will find that, for them, that pain so severe and trying is a hidden treasure, wherein may be found the most glittering gems and precious stones of virtue to adorn their heavenly crowns, and the plegdes of a happy death! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And he prayed Him to heal his son."—John 4, 47.

THE Gospel to-day presents for our consideration a father anxious for the restoration of his son, seeking our divine Lord that he might beg of Him the health of his child. In this we find no cause for wonder, since not only is it the duty of parents to care for the welfare of their children, but their own love impels them to make all possible exertions for their comfort and recovery in sickness.

The duty of caring for the sick is one which concerns not parents only, but calls upon every one to lend a helping hand, as far as he is able, and the situation of the sick person requires it. It is included in the commandment of love of our neighbor, to which naturally succeeds the injunction of Christ, to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Therefore, as there are few who have not in sickness felt the need of the kindly aid and gentle ministrations of some pitying friends, be charitable when you are well, my dear brethren, and fail not to visit and comfort the sick.

Since the fall of our first parents, man has been constantly subject to illness, so that opportunities are never wanting to practise this excellent virtue.

Therefore, to remind you of your duty in regard to the sick, will be the object of my discourse to-day.

No good work is more meritorious than attendance upon the sick.

O Mary, saluted by the Church as health of the sick, obtain for us but a portion of the ineffable compassion with which thy immaculate heart is filled, that we may lend our neighbor, both spiritually and bodily, assistance in the sicknesses sent him by thy divine Son!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the honor and glory of God!

"Be not slow to visit the sick, for by these things thou shalt be confirmed in love." This is the admonition of the Holy Ghost, as we read in the Old Testament, and although this obligation, as I have already observed, is founded on the precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," there are other reasons why we should exercise kindness towards our suffering fellow-creatures.

Not only does this charity benefit them, but we ourselves are thereby benefited temporally and assisted spiritually. Temporally, because in assisting the sick with loving care, we set an example of good will and charity which will incite others to do likewise. We will so edify those with whom we come in contact that when our time for sickness arrives, they will, if possible, attend upon us.

We will derive spiritual profit in caring for the sick, for, in suggesting to them acts and prayers suitable

to their condition, thoughts and sentiments must surely be awakened within us, which will be of the greatest profit to our souls. We will have occasion to practise many virtues in the sick-room, especially patience.

Our solicitude regards immediately the bodily welfare of the sick. We must try to alleviate their sufferings, and promote their recovery by securing or advising the attendance of a skillful physician, and seeing that the remedies are properly administered, and the directions conscientiously carried out.

Should a sick person be so afflicted as to be helpless, his attendants will have still greater merit in caring for him, which is true also of contagious or loathsome diseases. What acts of heroic virtue have not the saints practised in this regard! Some have even gone so far as to apply their lips to disgusting sores and suck out the poisonous matter. And it is recorded in several instances that such magnanimous victories over self were so pleasing to God that He restored the sick persons to health.

Think of such bright examples when you are called upon to perform duties repugnant to human nature for the sick. Many religious orders, as the Theatines, have taken vows to attend the sick, no matter what is their disease; and when pestilence rages in all its horrors, they joyfully go forth, perhaps to die.

A glorious occasion of merit is afforded by attending to those stricken down with some lingering disease, as consumption. How replete with charity, and how pleasing to God, is such attention! Greater

merit, perhaps, can be gained by remaining with those unfortunate persons whom God has afflicted with nervous diseases, convulsions, or even insanity, where the patience of an attendant may be often and severely tried. There are many families whose children, from their earliest infancy, have been subject to epilepsy or falling sickness, and who are delicate until they have attained their full growth. In such cases parents can lay up a store of merits for eternal life by bearing with patience the heavy cross.

Parents whose children have been visited by illness, resulting in a total loss of reason, may derive consolation from the thought that these children may, at least, die in their innocence. It would be well for such parents to look upon the afflictions of their children, and all the trouble entailed upon them in consequence, as a purgatory, wherein they can atone for their sins. And, indeed, in many instances, such trials are sent in punishment of the sins of drunkenness, excess, and impurity which they have committed. If it be our duty to provide for the bodily comfort of sick persons, it is a far more essential one to bestow every attention upon their spiritual condition.

First, then, my brethren, you should seek to awaken such sentiments in the mind and heart of the invalid as will enable him to accept the sickness as coming from the hand of a loving Father; and while exhorting him to bear patiently his suffering, remind him that not a single hair can fall from our heads without the permission of that heavenly Father.

Secondly, constantly revive his courage by reminding him that in sickness, perhaps even more than in health, he can love God and do His holy will; that he can behold, as St. Bede advises, in his pains a method of anticipating and canceling those infinitely greater ones of purgatory. This voluntary expiation of our sins is not merely expiatory, like the pains of purgatory, but also meritorious for heaven.

One can make rapid strides towards perfection, and even lead others along the path to paradise during the weary hours spent upon a bed of sickness; he can prove the liveliness of his faith, the firmness of his hope, and the ardor of his charity towards God.

But, above all, those who are in attendance should see that the sick person neglects not to send for his spiritual guide, and be fully reconciled with God and prepared for death, should there be any danger of a fatal termination of the disease. Let no false shame, or motives of human respect, or mistaken kindness deter you, who have charge of the sick, from the performance of this duty. So far from being a kindness, it is the greatest cruelty to keep an invalid in ignorance of the danger he is in; however, it is unnecessary, and even wrong, to tell the solemn and often unwelcome truth so abruptly as to increase the danger.

Many physicians, even those differing from us in faith, have testified that a worthy reception of the Sacraments is most beneficial and conducive to recovery, on account of the peace and calm resulting therefrom. And, according to St. James, extreme unction

was instituted to restore also bodily health if it be the will of God.

It is more prudent far to take the safer alternative, for, later on, the illness may take such a turn as to prevent all preparation for, and reception of, the Holy Sacraments. Oh, how many souls have been lost forever through the mistaken kindness of their friends! Husbands and wives, parents and children, mark well my words, for if you neglect this sacred duty it may be a source of never-ending regret!

Should the sickness be a protracted one, care should be observed not to spend time in the sick-room, in conversing upon worldly or frivolous topics. Rather select some edifying subject or read aloud, if the state of the patient permit, from time to time, some portion of the "Lives of the Saints." All who in this manner visit the sick, remembering the promise of our divine Saviour, that whatsoever is done to the least of His brethren He will look upon as done to Himself, may certainly have every reason to hope that at the last day they will hear those blessed words: "Enter into the joy of the Lord; for I was sick, and you visited Me!" Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Lord, come down before that my son die."—John 4, 49.

THIS anxious father went with all haste to Jesus, but not until the illness of his son had reached such a point that his life was despaired of, and then he begged the Lord Jesus to restore that son to health. His prayer was granted; the boy recovered, but only by a miracle.

From this circumstance, I will take occasion to speak to-day of a singular infatuation which prevails to an alarming extent both among the sick and those in health, and which is fraught with danger to the soul. I allude to the delay of conversion. Confession is postponed from day to day, for each one hopes that he will have time for reconciliation with God, even though advancing age or increasing weakness should prove the futility of that hope.

I am sure that scarcely a sinner exists in whose breast a lingering spark of faith still glimmers, who does not cherish the hope that, at some future time, he may return to his duty. Yes, although he may have given over his soul to the devil, he does not despair to return to God, though it be at his dying hour. Very good! There is a possibility, of course, that he may be converted by a miracle at the last; but what folly to wait for a miracle! O folly! folly! O blind and infatuated worldlings!

A preacher can scarcely ever select this subject for a discourse to his hearers without having before him some one to whom it applies.

My subject to-day, therefore, shall be the great danger in which the soul is placed, of eternal reprobation, by this lamentable delay in returning to God.

O Mary, patroness of a happy death, pray that thy poor erring children may obtain the grace of a true conversion, and return, without delay, to the service of thy Son!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Delay not to be converted to thy God; to-day when thou shalt hear His voice, do not harden thy heart." The Holy Ghost thus admonishes us; our own conscience whispers the same. Let us not still its voice; but walk according to the light of faith and the dictates of reason.

There are many, even among Catholics, who delay their conversion until the hand of the Lord is upon them, and they are stretched upon their dying bed. During life their object seemed to be to defraud their Creator of the love and obedience due Him; and now they would even defraud the devil of what they so assiduously prepared for him. Can aught but a miracle save such a creature? What can be said to one who thus delays his conversion?

Listen, sinner! your cry is: "*To-morrow! to-mor-*

row!—yet, for a little while, I will drive the thought of God away!" By this you acknowledge that you intend to change your life at some future time; then, too, you admit that at present you are leading an evil life. A sick person tries to obtain relief without delay. Christian! sinner! is corporal illness to be mentioned in the same breath with that dreadful malady which oppresses your soul? There is but one evil, but it is the origin and source of all evils, and that is: Sin! You believe this, and yet your cry is: "To-morrow! to-morrow!" O folly! O presumption!

You say: "*Another time!*" Then, according to your own confession, sin is no gain. No, it is not. On the contrary, it is loss. And what a loss! It means the loss of God, of heaven, of all that is worth having, if you die in your present state.

Is there one among you who, losing a sum of money, would not immediately take steps to recover it? And what is money in comparison to divine grace? Christian! sinner! some other time, do you say? Would you say to the physician who comes to you in sickness: "I do not require your services now; come some other time; come in a month or a year?" Behold, you are sick unto death; and, according to St. Ambrose, your malady is either pride, avarice, anger, gluttony, envy or impurity. Christ is your Physician, the Sacrament of Penance your remedy; use it, and be healed.

"Some other time," you say. If a conflagration were raging in your vicinity, and waves of the fiery sea were rolling madly towards your home, would you say:

"To-morrow! to-morrow!—it will be time enough then to extinguish the flames?"

"Some other time," you say. If you fell from a ship into the ocean; and if I, seeing you fall, hastened to your rescue, would you repulse my aid, and say: "To-morrow! to-morrow!—it will be time enough then?"

O sinner! your soul is engulfed in the restless waves of passion, and the priests of your Holy Church eagerly extend a helping hand, longing to aid you; but you say: "Some other time; I am not in danger yet!"

Now, I ask you one question: Will it always be in your power to return to God? You fain would answer: *Yes!* and believe you are in the right; but I must warn you that you may be most sadly mistaken. You are free; but do you consider the force of habit? Holy Scripture assures us that the young man does not turn in old age from the path he pursued in youth. There are exceptions, it is true; but experience tells us that they are few. And when did our Lord assure you that His efficacious grace would be ready for you whenever it suited your convenience to accept it?

"I will have time enough,—later on I will listen to the voice of God." You have no assurance that you will. Listen to this terrible warning: "You shall seek Me, but you shall not find Me; you shall die in your sins!" As our sins have their measure, so also has the grace of God, which He alone knows. And are you willing to expose yourself to the frightful risk of losing your soul? Be wise, and to-day when you hear His voice, harden not your heart. Do not say: "God

is merciful, and I can repent even on my death-bed." He is merciful, but He is just also; and how many are called before the judgment-seat of Christ without a moment's warning! This is especially the case in America, where fatal accidents are of constant occurrence. And even were you certain of the very day and hour of your death, are you sure that you will have a priest to assist you? Do not say: "Yes, I am sure; I live so near the Church, I can not fail to have the priest." I tell you, that were the priest to take up his abode in your very house, you could have no such assurance. Many have allowed themselves to be deluded thus; and, death surprising them, they have gone to "the house of their eternity" without the support and aid of the Holy Sacraments, and, perhaps, alas, have been lost forever!

Be not presumptuous in postponing your conversion; for even if you should have a priest to assist you in your last moments, could you, after a life spent in forgetfulness of God and His commandments, so dispose your soul in a moment as to benefit by his assistance? You know not in what state you will be in that awful hour. Your mind may be weakened, and your body enfeebled and convulsed with pain, so as to prevent you from making your confession properly. And could you be absolved in that helpless condition? I do not say that the priest would not pronounce the words of absolution, but would they be of any avail? You might be unable to elicit one single act of heart-felt contrition.

What is meant by true contrition? That sorrow which will enable you to detest sincerely all that you for years have loved and esteemed more than God, to whom you are indebted for every thing. Consider it well, O sinner! You have loved the world and its creatures during a life-time, clinging to them as long as you could; and now that you see them slipping away, you pretend to forsake them, and to turn lovingly to that God towards whom you have been more than indifferent. Ah, friends! nothing less than a miracle of grace is needed here! The priest may be deceived; but to God the heart of the dying impenitent sinner is fully revealed in all its deformity. Think of the terrible examples we read in Holy Scripture! The dying Antiochus was loud in his professions of repentance and of resolutions to lead a godly life, if God would spare him. "He prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy," because he only prayed as does a slave writhing under the pain of the lash. In health, he would have gone on in his wickedness. Therefore, O sinner! listen to the warning you receive to-day, and delay not to be converted to the Lord thy God!

We learn from this day's Gospel that the son grew better; for, as the ruler "was going down, his servant met him, and they brought him word that his son lived; and the father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, thy son liveth." Would that, from all here present, who are in mortal sin, the priest, in the tribunal of penance, could receive the

blessed assurance, that during this sermon, "at the same hour" that you listened to my words, you resolved, within your hearts: "I will delay no longer; I will make a good confession, and save my soul." To which the whole celestial host cry: Amen!

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."—Matt. 18, 35.

THE Gospels which are read to you from the pulpit during the ecclesiastical year afford opportunities for the expounders of the Divine Word to lay before you those duties which are inseparably connected with the leading of a good Catholic life. To be true children of God, we must live to please God,—to do His holy Will,—to increase our merits for heaven, and to secure our eternal salvation. To assist us in this is the ardent wish of our holy mother—the Church.

In to-day's Gospel are pointed out obligations, the fulfillment of which will be most effectual in promoting our salvation. One very important obligation relates to the forgiveness of our neighbor,—a virtue which we are bound to practise, no matter what injury he has been guilty of towards us, or how repugnant it is to our feelings to forgive.

Remember how merciful and forgiving our divine Lord is to us. We have but to ask sincerely for pardon, and we are received once more into His favor!

In the concluding words of the Gospel we are threatened in the most impressive manner that, unless we forgive our neighbor, we ourselves can not hope for forgiveness.

Let us consider to-day how justly this duty of forgiveness is imposed on us, and how vain and futile the pretexts which are put forward in excuse for rancor and enmity!

O Mary, mother of fair love, and queen of mercy, we pray thee, instill into our hearts the spirit of fraternal love, and forgiveness towards all whom we look upon as enemies!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Christ, my brethren, commands us to love our enemies. There is no special virtue in loving our friends, for nature prompts us to do so; but to love and forgive our enemies heroic virtue is required, and those who thus practise charity will be rewarded a thousand-fold. Think often of this precept, take it to heart, remember its importance; for Satan, who loves to fish in troubled waters, is ever on the alert, seeking occasions to make us transgress it.

To the violation of this commandment our Lord has attached terrible warnings, and for its fulfillment He has given us the most consoling promises, such as are united to no other commandment, not excepting the one which enjoins upon us the love of our

Maker. St. John has assigned a reason for this prerogative when he assures us that "whoever says he loves God, yet hateth his brother, is a liar." It is true that our Lord has also uttered those awful words: "He that believeth not shall be condemned;" but what would it profit a man to shed his blood and die a martyr's death, hoping to wear the martyr's crown, if enmity reigned in his heart? Oh, believe me, it would avail him naught, and besprinkled with a martyr's blood, he would rush head long into hell; for "He that loveth not abideth in death," says St. John. And Christ Himself tells us, that if we do good only to those who do good to us we are no better than the heathen. Our Lord deprives no one of the genial, vivifying sun, but allows its rays to fall on the just and unjust alike. It was upon the last evening of His mortal life that He uttered the injunction: "Love one another, as I have loved you." It was also His first petition when the desire of His cruel executioners was accomplished, and His sacred body hung in agony upon the cross. Then from His divine lips came forth the prayer: "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do,"—a proof that His bitter agony, His dreadful scourging,—the sharp pain of the cruel thorns, as they pressed His sacred brow,—the weary weight of the cross, as He bore it up to Calvary's Mount,—and, last of all, His death upon that cross would avail naught to the Christian who would refuse to forgive, even as He forgave!

On this point, nothing is left to our own inference;

for Christ lays down the law in the most decided manner, when He assures us that, if we do not forgive others, our sins shall not be forgiven.

St. Augustine tells us that whoever is not aroused by this terrible denunciation of Jesus Christ,—our Judge,—not only sleeps, but is spiritually dead.

It is vain to say "I am a Catholic," while you refuse to forgive those who have offended you. There is no hope of eternal blessedness for you. In vain for you the benefits of our holy faith; in vain the Holy Sacraments. Not even one, "our Father," could your confessor give you for a penance without placing a curse upon your lips; for your prayer would be to be forgiven as you forgive,—and you refuse to forgive! "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Oh, pause, Christians, whose hearts are full of enmity, before you pronounce those words! Pause, and resolve to forgive as you hope to be pardoned, otherwise you will belong to the devil,—to the declared enemy of God and your salvation,—to that demon of evil, whose hatred towards ransomed man is ever urging him to lure souls on to their eternal ruin!

And nothing that you can urge in your own defense will avail you before God. You may say: "Father, could I but narrate the injury I have suffered, you would tell me I had reason to be obdurate!"

I answer: God has commanded, let His creature obey. But, you will say, my enemy does not deserve forgiveness. I answer: Do you deserve forgiveness

from God? Were all the injuries that could ever be wrought by the hand of a man against a fellow-man added together they would bear no comparison to the guilt of one mortal sin; and perhaps, oh unforgiving sinner, there are many upon your soul! Yet God is ready to forgive you. And are you greater than God?

"He does not deserve it," you say. But may not your enemy be converted to God, and become more pleasing to Him than you have ever been? You do not consider him worthy of forgiveness. Were the executioners of our Saviour worthy to be forgiven by Him? Are you worthy? Yet He prayed that they might be forgiven, and He is ready to pardon you. He set you a glorious example, when, from the depths of His wounded and agonizing heart, He forgave and prayed for His enemies!

Most certainly you are not bound to associate with persons when you know that new contentions would arise from such intercourse, but let your conduct be such as to show that you would willingly be kind to them when they require your assistance. If you have a coolness with any one, and an opportunity offers for a reconciliation, hasten to make the advances. It will be an exercise of virtue most salutary for your soul. If you are in earnest about the salvation of your soul, you will even seek for reconciliation. How sweet, then, will be to you those words of Christ: "Forgive, and you also will be forgiven!"

If you are already in the state of grace, how many new graces will Jesus grant you because you have

forgiven for pure love of Him! Think of St. John Gualbert, who became a saint because, for love of God, he forgave the murderer of his brother!

St. Jerome says that a Christian may say he can not fast on account of hard labor,—or that he is not able to labor in consequence of illness,—or that it is beyond his power to give alms, because he is in poverty himself,—but that no one can say he is not able to forgive; for that requires only an effort of the will.

You may say: "I feel no spirit of forgiveness in my heart." That may be; the heart is not free, but the will is free. One may feel distaste towards a bitter medicine, but by a powerful effort of the *will*, he will swallow it, for the sake of the benefit he will derive from it. Besides, if you sincerely try to forgive, for love of God, all bitterness will pass away, and in its place will come into your heart a sweetness such as passeth all understanding.

Therefore, to one and all of you I say, forgive. Forgive, for the sake of your neighbor, for the sake of your souls, and for the love of that Saviour Who forgave His enemies upon the cross!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Pay what thou owest."—Matt. 18.

THE parable presented for our consideration, in this day's Gospel, refers to one of the principal duties which we, as Christians, are bound to observe. The Gospel warns us against remaining at enmity with our neighbor; but there is another violation of the precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," which, if persisted in, will debar us from entering the gates of eternal bliss. This is to delay making that restitution which is due to our neighbor, either in his person or property; or to neglect repairing, as far as we can, whatever scandal we may have given to others. St. Augustine, as a doctor of the Church, warns us that the sin will not be forgiven, unless unjustly gotten goods are restored.

And the truly repentant Catholic will not be satisfied with merely restoring the goods; but will, by multiplied good works and acts of charity, testify that his heart is truly changed.

If this were universally practised, how enviable would be the condition of the great human family; and whose fault is it that it is not so? It is your own, my brethren.

Let us consider to-day, therefore, how positively our duty to our neighbor obliges us to restore whatever we have unjustly taken from him, whether property or reputation.

O Mary, mirror of justice, pray that we may be disposed to restore whatever we have unjustly acquired.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor of God!

There scarcely exists an obligation to which so little attention is paid, in our examination of conscience for confession, as that of which I will speak to-day.

In the first place, many do not even give a thought to the fact that they commit a grievous sin by injuries done to their neighbor. Secondly, the penitent, in many instances, not only accuses himself in a most imperfect and defective manner in this respect, but even delays making restitution when fully able to do so. To avoid making a bad confession, examine yourselves on this point with the greatest care. Reflect whether you have injured any one in any way, and to what extent, so that you can make reasonable satisfaction.

Have you always been just to your neighbor? Do not hesitate to restore the ill-gotten goods without delay, especially when the sum is considerable. If any difficulty exists in the way of your doing this,—as, for instance, if you are no longer aware of the residence of the party you have injured, or if you can not send him safely the money,—you satisfy your obligation by bestowing the sum on the poor, on widows and orphans, by donations to religious institutions, and by having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered up

from time to time for those you have injured, be they living or dead.

Another duty, and one which is neglected too often, is the payment of those debts we have lawfully contracted. If the neglect be willful, the sin is as grievous as if you actually were to take away the property of your neighbor. This applies also to payment of house-rent or board, which is justly due; and it applies also to the payment of pew-rent and other debts due to the Church.

Equally dangerous and universal is this delay of restitution, for it causes many to make sacrilegious confessions, and finally condemns them to hell. If the flames of that dreadful prison-house and its never-ending torments were more frequently considered, this duty, which is now passed over so lightly, would be attended to more promptly than it is. Even if your transgressions should not, on this point, condemn you to everlasting punishment, your soul will have to suffer in the purifying flames of purgatory until the very last farthing shall be atoned for.

But let not your love for your neighbor rest satisfied with acts of justice towards him. Our Saviour has assigned pre-eminence to this virtue. Let not His command be a dead letter. Be active in benevolence; be kind to those whom God has deprived of their nearest and dearest ones. How many destitute widows and orphans are in your midst? Give to them of that bounty with which He has blessed you. Or, if you, too, should be among the poor and needy, give

that most precious offering—sympathy—to your fellow-sufferers, and gladden their hearts with the knowledge that they are not without a friend.

If none in your vicinity be in want of assistance, then be generous towards your divine Saviour by giving what you can to the Church. How noble that charity which prompts one to aid in the erection and support of schools where Christ's little ones are instructed in our holy faith, or to assist those missionaries who, in distant lands, are toiling to promote the interests of God's kingdom upon earth!

O children of the Church, devote some of your zeal and munificence to such undertakings! It will be most pleasing to the heart of our Lord, and you will, indeed, fulfill the precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If all who call themselves children of the Church would do this, and if all men would acknowledge the Church as their true mother, then, through the blessing of God, peace and plenty would reign over the land, and throughout all nations of the earth.

Such a happy condition of affairs was portrayed by the Prophet Isaias when he said: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb; a little child shall lead them." "Man will leave the sword for the sickle and the plowshare,"—that is, the time of peace and plenty will come, and the bond of love unite all hearts.

But, alas! at the present day, enmity and hatred, indifference to the sorrows of our neighbor, hard-heartedness and selfishness separate and wound the

hearts of the human race. Entire nations, calling themselves Christians, wage sanguinary war against each other, and thus the world remains ever a valley of tears.

But if this state of affairs is too general to be remedied by us, much good could still be effected in families, and even in entire congregations, if all the members would unite and live together in harmony, striving, in holy emulation, to be first in practising the golden rule—to do as they would be done by.

God grant that this admonition may sink deeply into the hearts of all here present. What a glorious harvest of souls would then be gained by my sermon to-day! what glorious results for time and eternity! Then, like a brilliant light which beams from some lofty mountain top, your good example would shed its rays afar, enticing others to walk in the luster of its rays! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And they came and told their Lord all that was done."—Matt. 18.

THE Gospel to-day points to three obligations imposed upon us by the commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The first, is the duty of forgiveness of injuries; and any failure in this will debar us from obtaining the divine forgiveness, as we are warned by God Himself. The second, is the duty of restitution, without the fulfillment of which, if we are able to comply with it, there is no salvation for us.

The third duty relates to the consideration which we are bound to have for the character of our neighbor. And this is probably the point upon which the greatest number of Christians transgress. Hence it becomes necessary to exhort the faithful to a better observance of this duty, and to this will my efforts be directed to-day. This particular violation of the precept upon which I address you is fraught with danger most imminent to the soul. If we bear hatred in our hearts, or if we have taken the property of another, we can not but be aware that we are in a state of sin and rebellion against our Creator; but the temptations to injure the character of others are so subtle, and occasions of defamation are so frequent, that it imperceptibly becomes an habitual sin, and even a second nature to many.

O Mary, most loving mother, may we realize through thy intercession how grievous is this transgression!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

The servants acquainted their master with the wicked conduct of their fellow-servant, and they were right, for one sins by silence where it is a duty to speak. This admonition refers particularly to members of the same family. If children remark faults which their brothers or sisters commit, it is their duty to tell their parents, as also any thing improper which they may see in the conduct of the servants. On the other hand, if servants are aware of any faults or evil habits indulged in by the children of those with whom they are in service, or by the other servants, they must make it known to the parents or superiors, if there be no other means of correcting the evil. This is particularly obligatory in cases of theft and impurity, or drunkenness. To remain silent, thinking that it is no concern of yours, or that to tell of it would be an ungrateful task, would be most reprehensible, and might even become a mortal sin.

But it is not by silence that sins against fraternal charity are most frequently committed. Rash judgments, suspicions, tale-bearing, slander, and calumny are the rocks against which this virtue is wrecked, and whoever is in earnest in the great affair of salvation will subject his conscience to a thorough examination.

Let us then separately consider each of those offenses.

Man wounds the reputation of his neighbor by rash suspicion and judgment, that is, by suspecting or judging without sufficient grounds. Man is prone to this species of sin, for frequently he judges others by himself, having in many cases committed the sin of which he suspects his neighbor.

Guard against the vice of suspicion, for by it charity is wounded in a thousand ways. Christ Himself has warned us against judging from appearances. Experience teaches how often they deceive. Even the saints have been the victims of mistaken suspicion, and subjected, in consequence, to the most cruel persecutions. Remember how Christ Himself incurred the suspicions of His enemies, as we learn from His words: "Why do you think evil in your hearts?"

All that I have said applies equally to rash judgments, of which all are guilty, who, without just cause, not only suspect others of sin, but criticise their actions, assigning to them the most sinister motives; who refuse to believe that even the most noble actions were performed from pure love of God, and insist, maliciously, that some evil design was at the bottom. Christians, unfortunately, are often so much engaged in judging their neighbor that they find no time to correct their own faults. They are the hypocrites of whom Christ speaks, that behold the mote in their brother's eye, but see not the beam in their own.

Oh, how many such hypocrites there are in the

world! "Judge not, lest ye be judged." Remarkable words, and worthy of the deepest attention.

It is a most noble trait to be always ready to defend the absent, and to leave the judgment of his acts to a higher tribunal than that of an uncharitable world. Most certainly, prudence demands a certain reserve in our intercourse with others, until we are acquainted with their moral character; but remember that "Charity thinketh no evil," and guard against being the executioner of your neighbor's good name. There are many moral executioners in the world. Thank God if you are not of their number!

More pernicious than rash suspicions and judgments, are calumny, detraction, and tale-bearing.

Calumny is the attributing to others sins that they have not committed.

Detraction regards actual faults of our neighbor, and consists in making them known without sufficient reason. Sometimes it is allowed to mention the faults of our neighbor. Any one of the three following reasons will justify us. First, to correct the delinquent; secondly, to warn and guard a third person; lastly, to defend one's self against imputations and wrongs, provided no other means is left us.

If you feel conscious of any other motives than these, such as love of gossip, or uncharitable feelings, and if the sin you reveal be grievous and not publicly known, you commit a great wrong, and become most guilty in the sight of God.

Let this be considered well, and taken deeply to

heart by those Christians, who, while leading a good and pious life in other respects, are specially tempted by the devil to sins against the virtue of charity, because they are thus the more easily led on to the commission of mortal sins. Offenses against this virtue are generally less striking than other grievous faults. It is an unfortunate truth that the number of those pious gossips and chattering devotees is alarming; and their mode of attack being generally a secret one, the greatest mischief is wrought by their tongues.

Should you be thrown among such persons, do not listen with any appearance of pleasure to their tales, but openly show that you do not approve them.

If you have injured your neighbor by telling what is not true against him, you must retract your falsehood, and restore that ruined reputation. But should you suffer from the slanderer's malicious tongue, defend your character with calmness and prudence; but if your efforts for redress prove vain, then, for Christ's dear love, bear the wrong with meekness, as He bore the heavy burden of the cross so unjustly laid upon His sacred shoulders. He has walked the royal way of the holy cross, and His saints have followed therein.

Imitate them, and on the day of final reckoning our Lord will remember you a thousand-fold! Amen!

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker . . . . for Thou dost not regard the person of men."—Matt. 22, 16.

THERE are two principal reasons why the Word of God has so little influence upon the life of man,—two great obstacles which particularly stand in the way of the fulfillment of the duties which, as children of God, we are bound to comply with. The first is, that an inherent love of truth is wanting in our fallen nature. Members of the Catholic Church, indeed, confess the truth, and their belief in it, but frequently it is a confession which cometh from the lips alone; for their hearts are closed against its influence, and their lives, therefore, continually contradict the professions they make. Too often men are deterred from opening their hearts to the divine influence of God's blessed Word by human respect,—by a sinful, slavish fear of poor, weak mortals like themselves. This is one of the greatest obstacles to salvation!

Can there be greater or more consummate blindness and folly than to refrain from living according to the spirit and direction of that which you know to be

the truth, which you openly acknowledge to be the truth, merely from a despicable slavish fear of those who, while they seem to applaud, laugh you to scorn in their hearts for being afraid to practise what you profess to believe?

The reason why this human respect rules with despotic sway over the hearts of mankind, is the little love they bear the truth.

O Mary, as mother of Christ, you stood beneath the cross, in presence of the executioners of your divine Son, obtain for us courage, not only to acknowledge our faith upon all occasions, but to practise it openly also, victoriously overcoming the promptings of human respect!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker." Even the enemies of our divine Lord acknowledged this! Oh, what rare qualities are sincerity and integrity of purpose among the children of men! and how comparatively few among them can be said to give testimony to the truth, regardless of the world and its opinion! By this assertion I do no injustice to the human race; for the Holy Ghost, who knows and searches the heart of man, assures us, through the lips of the Apostle of love, that "men love darkness better than light;" and, loving darkness, they love evil also. It was the spirit of falsehood who caused

our first parents to fall, and it is the same spirit who causes the Divine Word,—that Word which should bring peace and salvation to man,—to fall unheeded upon the rocky ground of his heart!

Had mankind really loved and sought after the truth, the entire world would have been converted to Christianity at the time of the Apostles; but such a happy result of their labors was not permitted. And why? Paganism allowed men to give themselves up to the lusts of the flesh,—the Apostles, on the contrary, preached penance and self-denial, and of these the people, buried in their sinful pleasures, cared not to hear! Had they come to inform the world of some speedy method of becoming rich, or of prolonging life, so that for centuries men might revel in one uninterrupted course of sinful pleasure, with what demonstrations of welcome would they not have been met, and countless disciples would have followed in their train. But the reward which was meted out to those followers of the crucified One, who preached truth to a people who were held in the thrall of the most degrading superstition, was persecution and death! In the very same spirit did the chosen people of God proceed in the old law. Recall the reproach of Christ to the Jews, that the warning words of truth from the lips of the prophets were unwelcome to their ears.

Relentless and bitter persecution still pursues,—yes, even at the present day,—in many instances all those who seek to spread the word of God, and dispose the hearts of His creatures to live as true chil-

dren of the Church according to the principles of the Gospel.

The perversity of the human heart is manifested in this persecution, yet it stands forth in bolder relief in the lives of those Catholics who, with the lips, confess to believe in the Church, but whose lives are diametrically opposed to the same; who live sunk in sensual pleasures, even as the heathens; yes, some among them are more given to carnal lust than those who know not Christ. They give not a thought to the great affair of salvation. "With desolation is the whole land made desolate, because there is none that thinketh in his heart," says the Prophet. And yet the teachings of faith refer directly to questions of most vital interest to man. Take, for example, the following: Who am I? What do I possess? What will become of me? How long can I expect this prosperity to smile upon me? and is it not fraught with danger to my immortal soul? Our holy faith supplies the answers, to which Catholics often care not to listen. And why? Because a love for truth is wanting in their hearts. If this virtue were more deeply implanted therein, what lives of holiness would result! What firmness in the pursuit of piety! what self-sacrifice and fidelity would characterize the Catholic then! Let us dwell for a few moments on the answers to those questions.

Faith teaches, child of humanity, that poor and miserable as you are in this world, you are still a child of God, and your soul is made to His image and like-

ness. As a child of the Church, you are a fellow-citizen of the angels,—a brother,—a sister,—of the saints,—a child of Mary, queen of heaven,—a brother of Christ! What glorious titles! You recognize your right to them! why, then, do you live according to the spirit of the world? Because you love not truth in your heart!

Faith teaches that, as a true child of the Church, you are in the state of sanctifying grace,—a state which exalts you above all earthly dignities, and enables you, with every breath you draw, to gain new merits for life eternal, and lay up a precious treasure in the kingdom of heaven, the glories of which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor human heart conceived! Man believes this, and yet he can live only to heap up riches for this world! In his heart the love of truth is lacking, therefore this solemn lesson is passed unheeded.

Faith teaches that all we gain for heaven by serving God remains forever; and yet, until the last hour of life, man is solicitous about those things which so quickly pass away,—a fact most difficult to understand, yet it is so!

Faith teaches that no man is sure of his salvation, and we are told to labor for it with fear and trembling; and oh, how terrible are the eternal consequences of sin! What misery awaits us if we die in sin, and are lost for all eternity! And yet man lives as if he were well assured that grace and time would be given him

to repent and be saved. How strange and sad is not this prevalent indifference to the truth!

Christ applied the epithet "blessed" to the virtue of zeal in striving after protection. The lovers of the world, and even members of the Church among them, on the contrary, cry out: Blessed are the rich; blessed are they whom no one dare offend; blessed are they who, unmolested by the poor, enjoy their wealth, flattered and esteemed by all; blessed are they whose lives know naught but pleasure, and who, without a thought of self-denial, enjoy the delights of earth! Sometimes, perchance, conscience calls loudly to these "blessed" ones of the world to give active testimony to that faith which, but too often, they disgrace and despise, but human respect steps in, and drowns the warning voice. That terrible, What will be said of me? is in the way. They have no time to go to church, to read spiritual books, to receive the Sacraments, to labor for the conversion of sinners, or the salvation of souls, to bring souls from the darkness of error into the light of our holy faith, and all through human respect! What would my husband, my wife, my friends, *the world* say? What would be said by those who move in a circle of society where it is my aim to be admitted and who despise Christ and the religion He founded?

There, alas! is the rock against which the noblest souls have suffered shipwreck! Who can deny the power which the torrent and whirlpool of public opinion exercises over man? Human respect! It is but

another name for that want of truth which forbids the Catholic to live consistently with the faith he daily professes. Through human respect Pilate delivered Christ into the hands of His enemies! He asks: "What is truth?" and then leaves the judgment-hall before Christ has time to inform him!

Thrice happy are all to whom can be applied the words of Christ in regard to Nathanael: "Behold an Israelite, in whom there is no guile!" Behold a true child of the Church, in whom there is no falsehood,—sincere, candid, and truth-loving soul, who will persevere to the end, and reach the abode of eternal truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."—Matt. 22.

CHRIST exhorts us, in this day's Gospel, to render to Cæsar the tribute that rightfully belongs to him. This admonition is a general one,—general, because it does not relate to any particular individual, but to the dignity of the lawful ruler of a nation, and to the power, authority and jurisdiction which he exercises,—because, as St. Paul teaches, the power to rule cometh not from himself, but through the disposition of God. "All power is from above," says the same Apostle. The words of Christ to Pilate also prove this: "You would have no power over Me, were it not given you from above."

We can not refrain from wonder at the sight of the God-man submitting himself to the unjust sentence pronounced upon Him by Pilate; but it was done to set us an example of honoring that power which God has imparted to those in lawful authority.

In the abstract, no one creature possesses any power over his rational fellow-beings, each one being free, and in possession of both reason and will. Besides, all creatures came forth alike from nothing, and why should one possess authority over another? Because God has invested certain persons with it for the good of individuals and nations, that order may be preserved and social harmony prevail.

This authority has been given to parents, superiors, and rulers of nations, unto whom children, servants, and subjects are bound to render homage and obedience.

To-day we will consider the duties which subordinates owe to those who have been placed over them by God.

O Mary, self-styled handmaid of the Lord, pray for us, that we, like you, may fulfill our duties faithfully for the love of God!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh. . . . . Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." These are the words of St. Paul; and all those who have entered the employ of others, as servants, may gather from them that they should give their labor faithfully, knowing that the most holy will of God has ordained that they should be placed in that humble position. He has willed that there should be rulers and subjects, from which the following duties arise:

Servants owe their masters *respect*, *love*, *obedience*, and *fidelity*. I say they owe them *respect*. Even though the character of those whom they serve may not be such as to inspire respect, they are, nevertheless, not excused from this obligation, because those

in lawful authority are the representatives of God Himself. This respect should be manifested in their exterior behavior and deportment; and should they see any thing in the conduct of their employers which they know to be reprehensible, they must never take the liberty of criticising or lightly talking it over among their fellow-servants; for, through mere love of talk, many a reputation has been, perhaps, irrevocably ruined.

Secondly, servants owe to those for whom they labor the duty of *love;* for although the precept of loving our neighbor binds all, yet upon them it becomes more binding, being in immediate contact with those whom they serve, and requires them to be particularly solicitous in doing, in all things, as they would wish to be done by, were they in such a position as to have servants of their own.

Let them, therefore, fulfill every duty carefully, with a view to advance the temporal interests of their masters, warning them of danger, damage or loss, never wasting their substance, much less pilfering the same, for they will have to render to God a strict account of their stewardship.

Servants should also direct their lives so as to inspire their employers with respect; and if they see that those whom God has called them to serve walk not in the way of salvation, they should neglect no opportunity to lead them to God by example, and even by word.

If the children, or the other servants of the house,

are guilty of any serious faults, it should be made known, by the one who is aware of it, to the proper authorities. He is bound also to pray for the culprits. Servants are obliged also to pray for their employers.

Finally, servants owe *fidelity*, the practice of which virtue will prevent them from doing aught which would injure those through whom they are enabled to gain an honest livelihood.

The principles on which these obligations are founded have already been noted, and servants should recognize the lawful authority of their masters, and admit that they possess undoubtedly the right to issue orders for the management of their own affairs, which orders it is their place to obey, not laboring merely to please the eye of men, but with a will, and for the love of God.

From this, however, it does not follow that masters have the right to command as they please. On the contrary, if they were to require something which it would be sinful to do, or forbid what God commands to be done, remember the admonition of the Apostle: "Obey God rather than man;" and, disregarding the promptings of human respect, distinctly and decidedly state that the favor of man is vain and trifling when compared with the favor of the Lord. Servants should prefer to lose a situation, no matter how advantageous, to living where they are expected to turn a deaf ear to the admonitions of conscience; neither should they remain where the duties are so numerous as to prevent them from attending divine service on Sundays and holydays of obligation, or complying with their

religious duties. Far better is it to sacrifice worldly gain by living in families where, although the wages may be lower, they are required to attend to their religion, and even assisted in doing so.

For there are also duties to be performed by those who take others into their service, since, if the Apostle reminds servants that they must obey for the love of God, he exhorts masters in like manner, reminding them that they also have a Master in heaven, to whom they must render a strict account. To fulfill their duties as they should, let those who engage the services of others consider that their servant is a creature of God, created in the divine image and likeness—a soul redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and created for heaven,—a brother, a sister in Adam,—a child of the Church, whose place, if his life has been in accordance with the maxims of the Gospel, may be far higher in heaven than that of the person he serves.

In conclusion, let masters treat their servants as they would wish to be treated if they were in a similar position; and, above all, see that they do not neglect the service of God and His Church. If masters and servants, employers and those who are employed, would act in this manner, peace and harmony would become general, while the strife and tumult in regard to labor and recompense would be at an end. The blessing of God would come upon them, remain with them, and at the hour of death they would be rewarded with everlasting happiness! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"Render to God the things that are God's."—Matt. 22, 21.

AT first glance it seems incomprehensible that we can have any thing to give unto God. Is He not the Creator of the universe,—the Lord,—the Ruler of all, to Whom belong the heavens and the earth? Yet it is so that even we have something to offer this most adorable Majesty,—a great, a most precious gift—our own will. Of course free-will has been bestowed upon us by God, but we can and should return it to Him by the exercise of that same free-will, resolving to seek God, and Him alone, and to fulfill His holy will in all things, and to love Him, above all, for His infinite perfections. This He requires of us, in the words: "My Son, give Me thy heart," which He has spoken in the Holy Scriptures. We know it, too, from Moses saying to the children of Israel: "And now what else does God require of you but to love Him?" This must, however, be a love made manifest by actions, viz: by the scrupulous fulfillment of what we, as Catholics, are bound to observe,—by the exact performance of every duty enjoined upon us by our mother, the Church of God, upon earth. Thus, although it may appear that we have nothing to give to God, a little reflection will convince us that we have much. Zeal and energy in promoting the interests of His Church will be a most acceptable offering.

What duties, in particular, do we owe to the kingdom of God upon earth; that is, His Church? We will consider them briefly to-day.

O Mary, mother of God, queen and protectress of the Church, grant that we, as thy children, may be ever zealous in promoting the interests of religion!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

"May my right hand forget its cunning, if I forget Thee, O Jerusalem!" exclaims holy David. With similar ardor we should sigh with the great Saint Augustine, who, with burning zeal, bursts forth with the assurance that never will he forget Holy Church!

The first duty we owe is *reverence*. Oh, how many reasons are there for us to venerate this holy spouse of Christ! She is the celestial spouse of the heavenly Adam,—the Eve and mother of the children of God. She, as the holy fathers observe, came forth from the side of Jesus, Who fell asleep in death on the cross, the heavenly Adam, as was symbolized by the blood and water that flowed from the pierced heart of the Redeemer. She is the mystical bride of Christ on earth, and, as the Church triumphant, she is His spouse in heaven.

To her was committed, as a most precious gift, the Word of salvation, together with the commission to teach it infallibly to all nations throughout all ages. To this infallible Church the world owes a debt of

gratitude for illuminating the way of salvation with the brilliant light of faith, and instructing all those who belong to her fold in that spiritual science which enables them to see, with vision unimpaired by earthly vapors, the path which leads to eternal joy!

This infallible Word was first proclaimed to wondering multitudes on that glorious Pentecost morn, when Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, announced it. From that hour it spread over the world. Its mission has ever been to instruct, console, and strengthen all those who do not close their hearts against the truth!

Within the Church, Christ has left ample means for our salvation,—the Holy Sacraments,—those ever-flowing fountains of divine grace, and the stupendous sacrifice of the new law, which, for more than eighteen hundred years, is daily offered up on so many altars to the almighty God, and by which is continually renewed in an unbloody manner the sacrifice of the Redemption. Oh, what a glorious sight for the whole celestial host is this! What glad triumphant strains! what hymns of praise resound throughout the court of heaven when the angels behold the graces which are poured forth upon the world during the offering of this great sacrifice, and the reception of the most adorable Sacrament of the altar by innumerable pious souls Not to the angels has God chosen to reveal the wonders of His forgiving goodness, but rather to the fallen children of Adam, whom the arms of His divine mercy embrace, for whom He assumed human

nature, and for whose benefit He founded His Holy Church. Therefore, let us render to that tender mother the veneration due her, and, like St. Louis, esteem it a happiness, far surpassing all earthly joys and honors, to belong to the one true fold.

Our second duty is *gratitude*. To the Church we owe individually all that we, as Catholics, possess,—religious instruction,—the Sacraments, with all their strengthening and consoling power,—the many spiritual aids which through her we enjoy, and will enjoy until the end of our days; yes, even after death she assists us when, as children of the suffering Church, we require her maternal assistance!

Out of this gratitude will arise the desire to comply with the third duty which we as children of God owe to the Church of God, viz: the duty of *loving* her with a sincere, active, and self-sacrificing love which will manifest itself first in a spirit of obedience. This spirit will impel us not only to fulfill the duties of religion ourselves, but to take care that all those under our charge comply with the same. Parents, masters and mistresses should take particular note of this.

This love will also manifest itself in zeal and solicitude in promoting the interests of religion,—in distributing edifying books, and instructing those who are ignorant of their religion, in prayer,—by giving testimony to our faith when occasion requires, and seeking opportunities of bringing infidels and heretics to the one true fold. Oh, how much lies within the

power of every Catholic! and what great things each one in his own sphere could accomplish, becoming, as it were, a missionary in bringing others to know and love this holy faith,—this one only true and divine Church! This admonition is particularly addressed to all those who live in the same house with persons of a different faith, or who are connected in business with them; for they can, by word and example, prove to them the beauty and truth of the Catholic religion, and perhaps become the means of their embracing the same.

Catholics must take care, however, before they attempt the conversion of sinners or non-Catholics, that their own lives are in accordance with the maxims of the Gospel.

This love should also manifest itself in an ardent zeal in doing what we can, wherever we live, for the Church,—"the place where His glory dwelleth,"—and also for the support and encouragement of parochial schools. Members of a congregation should not be satisfied with merely doing what is absolutely *necessary* in the way of assisting the Church, but should find their joy and delight in generously giving, if able, that which will enhance the glory and beauty of divine service.

One way of showing our love for the Church would be to enroll ourselves in some of the many associations which have been established for the propagation and protection of God's kingdom on earth, for which we will one day be rewarded a thousand-fold.

The faithful of the present day have frequent occasion to testify their love and devotion to the Church, when so many sovereigns and rulers are doing their utmost to destroy her, undaunted by the futility of their efforts. Infidelity and wickedness are rampant over the world, and the spirit of rebellion to lawful authority appears openly, spreading ruin and disaster in its path!

These, my dear brethren, are our duties towards the Church,—the kingdom of God upon earth,—that we may render to God the things that belong to God,—to Him Who created us from no merit of our own, and called us to be members of this Holy Church through Jesus Christ our Lord!—Amen!

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"For she said within herself: If I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed."—Matt. 9.

"IF I shall touch only His garment I shall be healed," so said the afflicted woman of whom the Gospel speaks to-day. And she was healed. "Be of good heart, daughter; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour." From this Gospel we should learn to hasten to Jesus in all our temporal necessities and sicknesses. We need not to touch with our hands the hem of His garment, for Christ did not say to the sick woman, "Because thou hast touched My garment thou art healed," but "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Therefore, if we, animated by lively faith, only in spirit stretch forth our hands to Jesus, He will be as willing to hear and as powerful to grant our petition for help, as He was in those ages far away; He can work a miracle in our behalf if it be of benefit to our souls.

We have, however, infinitely more reason in our spiritual maladies to draw near to Christ, and to touch, with the hands of faith, not only the hem of that gar-

ment which enveloped His sacred form while He dwelt upon earth, but also that mystical robe which conceals His glory from our mortal eyes, and which we are allowed to touch when we receive into our hearts the most adorable Sacrament of the altar. Happy we, if we do so with lively faith, and hearts so inflamed with ardent love, that the spiritual ills from which we suffer instantly depart from our souls.

Let us then consider to-day the salutary influence which the real presence in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar exerts upon us when, wearied of our sinful lives, we go and seek solace there.

O Mary, health of the weak, pray for us that we may, with loving confidence, seek every opportunity of visiting our Lord in the tabernacle where He awaits us!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Holy Church specially mentions, through the Council of Trent, that one effect of frequent Communion is a weakening of those passions which, since the fall of Adam in paradise, have drawn us away from the service of God; from which we can perceive how efficacious is the influence of Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament as a preservative against all maladies of the soul, or as a remedy, if we are so unfortunate as require one.

This will be plain to us, my brethren, if we take

separately those sins which are called capital, because they are the origin and source of every other sin. A brief consideration of each will show us how frequent recourse to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will weaken those vices in our hearts.

The first one of these perverse and sinful inclinations of the heart is called *pride*. Certainly there are reasons enough to recognize the foolishness and atrocity of this sin. There is a remedy which will aid us in curing this terrible evil—one glance at Him Who remains hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, the meek and lowly Jesus! Yes, cast one look upon Him so glorious in heaven, so inexorable in His justice, but in the Eucharist so loving, meek, and humble, veiling His majesty under the lowly guise of bread and wine. Bow down before Him, while with lively faith and firm confidence you cry: O most humble Jesus, hear my prayer which I pour forth with my whole heart! Heal my poor and sinful soul!

Say this to Him, especially when you, in Holy Communion, have touched the hem of His garment, and you will be healed of your pride; you will become humble in the endeavor to imitate this most humble Jesus.

The second capital evil from which many Christians suffer is *covetousness*. Oh, let us reflect how detestable a vice this is, and eagerly seek for a remedy! Oh, for some means of delivery from the thralldom in which this vice detains its unfortunate victims! It will be found in the presence of Jesus in the Most Blessed

Sacrament. Look at Jesus hidden there; look with lively faith upon Him; consider how He abides in the lowly tabernacle, poorer than when He walked the earth, and all for love of you. Receive him frequently, touch the hem of His sacramental garment, with the earnest petition: O my Jesus! through thy poverty in this most adorable Sacrament, where Thou dwellest for love of us, Thy glory hidden and dimmed, free my poor heart from all undue attachment to this world's dross! Utter this prayer sincerely, and you will be cured.

The third sinful propensity of the human heart is the passion of *lust*. Oh, how universal and terrible it is, and how difficult it is to cure! But even here there is no cause for despair, because in the frequent and worthy reception of the Bread of Angels a certain remedy exists. To all, therefore, who suffer from this dreadful malady of the soul, I would say, communicate frequently, often receive your Saviour. He will enkindle in your heart the fire of divine love, which will extinguish the glow of sensual passion in your soul. This blessed food is the remedy "which confers immortality," "the wine which maketh virgins."

The fourth principal or capital sin is *anger*, and many a soul is spiritually ill of it. Very few, indeed, are there who do not suffer from this malady. What folly to yield one's heart a willing victim to this wrath, when the remedy is within our reach. It can be found in the tabernacle, in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Kneel in adoration there, and consider the meekness with which Jesus remains hidden under the lowly forms of bread and wine, although He is frequently left without a worshiper—left entirely alone by the children of men, with whom it is His delight to dwell. Besides, He has to endure the scoffs and mockery of unbelievers and enemies of religion, and the indifference even of the children of the Church, the injustice of so many unworthy communions, sacrilegious profanations of His most precious legacy to the Church. Oh, what an example of meekness is given by this Lamb of God, Who is ready even to forgive Catholics who have ruthlessly trampled under foot His sacred Body and Blood.

Consider this when you pray before the tabernacle. Often receive Jesus, and implore His aid when you touch the hem of His sacramental robe, saying: "O Jesus, infuse into my heart a portion of that meekness which adorns Thy divine heart!" Frequently and fervently utter this ejaculation, and you will become more meek, you will forgive for the love of your Saviour.

The fifth capital sin, and most prevalent vice is *gluttony*. Oh, what a shameful passion is this! But God has provided a remedy for this obstinate disease of the soul. Reflect how Jesus abides in the tabernacle, without taking either food or drink; and when we receive Him, the Church requires us to take that heavenly food before having broken our fast. What

an admonition for all those who find their greatest pleasure in eating and drinking!

Ah, yes, frequent and worthy reception of Holy Communion will enable the glutton to overcome his predominant passion!

Envy is the sixth sinful propensity of the human heart, and one which, even viewed according to the light of reason, is a most hideous vice; but one for which, too, a remedy exists. Seek Jesus, really present in the Blessed Sacrament, with sentiments of lively faith, and reflect how He has even renounced His glory in heaven to abide with you, and all of us; to communicate to every child of the Church His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. What a motive for becoming all to all after the example of Christ, and for love of Him, to share with others, according to our means, the goods of this world with which He has blessed us! What a motive for us to look upon the wealth or happiness with which God has endowed our neighbor, not only without envy, but with joy! Think of this, my brethren, when you kneel in adoration before the tabernacle. Receive Jesus often in this sacrament of union and love. Animate your devotion with such sentiments as these: "My Jesus, I am wholly thine; and, knowing this, I ask, with loving confidence, the grace to overcome this envy which is gnawing at my heart!" This prayer, uttered from the heart, can not fail.

We have now come to the last of the seven capital sins, which is called *sloth*, the root of which is an im-

perfect knowledge of the adorable perfections of Christ, and a defective love for Him. Whence, then, can we obtain this knowledge and love of Him? Ah, where, but in an intimate and loving intercourse with Him in the august Sacrament of the altar obtained by frequent reception of the bread of life.

"He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in him," says Christ. "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever." Yes, most beloved in Christ, go and embrace that yoke which is sweet, that burden which is light. Hasten to Him, to your Saviour, and, by touching the hem of His sacramental robe, be healed of those grievous spiritual maladies, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And when the multitude was put forth, he went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose."

"I WILL lead thee into solitude, and there speak to thy heart." These are the words of the Holy Ghost, in the Canticle of Canticles, and indicate the disposition which a soul striving after perfection must have in order to receive the inspirations of that Spirit of Love, take them to heart, and follow the call of divine grace.

In seeking perfection several things are essential, viz., love of solitude, a refraining from useless conversation, and from all that tends to distract the soul from that desired end. A similar course must be pursued when a sinner is to be aroused from that spiritual death which sin has brought upon his soul, and to this the Gospel of to-day has reference.

Jesus was called to the house of a ruler, where He found a multitude gathered, for death had taken away his daughter in her youth.

But Jesus did not perform the miracle until the noisy multitude was put forth,—for the expression of Holy Scripture is literally "put forth,"—from which we are led to infer that the crowd did not go willingly, but resisted those who obeyed the command of our Saviour and required them to leave. Dearly beloved in Christ, let us apply this circumstance to the conversion of a sinner from his dangerous state.

Before that sinner can be restored from spiritual death to eternal life, his heart must be free from all strife and tumult.

And what is this commotion which rages in his heart? We will consider it briefly to-day.

O Mary, princess of peace, we pray thee, calm the storm that sweeps over the sinner's poor soul, that, when Jesus bids him "arise," he may listen to His voice!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

But if the sinner does not hear the sweet voice of his Saviour, or if it sound to his unwilling ear as the echo of some voice far away, or, if hearing it, he cares not to turn and obey the call, it is because his heart is always absorbed in the dissipations of this world.

First, there is the tumult of the passions in the heart of the sinner, who is borne hither and thither, swayed now by one evil impulse and then by another of the various sins which have become habitual to him. This tumult is like the raging of the sea, when the roaring of the angry waves prevents one from hearing the voice of another who calls from afar. Cast but one glance at the tempest-tossed life of the sinner, or even look into your own heart, and you may see there the reality of what I have described.

There is that poor sinner in whom the passion

of pride holds sway. Day and night he is engrossed by thoughts and schemes to mount higher and higher, until he reaches the most exalted pinnacle of earthly fame. And, oh! how wildly rages the tumult in his heart, when his well-devised schemes have failed to gain his ends; and, instead of honor and fame, his only reward is the scorn and contempt of men. With his heart thus filled with conflicting emotions, there is no room for any thought of God to enter there.

The ruling passion of another is avarice. Poor, tempest-tossed sinner! The noisy multitude clamoring in his heart will not let him hear the voice of Jesus, which bids him arise. Those endless schemes to increase his store, to amass riches until the worshipers of mammon will bow down before him, cause the tumult, which must cease before he can hearken to the call of grace. He knows no rest, fearing to be deprived of his prized wealth, his cherished treasure, but caring not to lay it away where neither moth nor rust can destroy nor thieves break in and bear it away. Should his fears be realized, the tumult rages more fiercely than ever; and, until the noisy multitude be put forth, there can be no thought of an earnest conversion to God.

But what words can be found to adequately express the state of that sinner who is held fast in the thralldom of lust! By day and by night the tumult of his passions rages so fiercely that he is entirely deaf to the voice of that Saviour who calls on him to repent,

and whose loving, compassionate heart will not refuse pardon—even to him!

Another allows anger and impatience to rage in his breast, and the tumultuous thoughts which arise therefrom, the feelings of revenge and hostility which abound, drown the voice of Jesus. Yes, and so loud is the tumult, so deafening its roar, that it is often heard afar off—in quarrels and contentions, in blasphemy. Even murder results from anger. Until this noisy multitude is put forth, the sinner will be deaf to the voice of his God.

What confusion and tumult prevails in the heart of the drunkard! The despicable vice of intemperance leads its victims to forget every thing—their families, their honor, their religion,—for drink winds round them a chain which they care not to break, and begets a tumult within and without. Look at the drunkard, as he emerges from some midnight revel, caring naught for the warning of his friends, the admonitions of his pastor, or the pleading of his Saviour for admission into his degraded heart. Not until the noisy multitude is put forth, can Jesus bid him arise from spiritual death.

With others the passion of envy is the principal failing, and it is a constant source of agitation to those who indulge in it. Torn by conflicting emotions at the sight of the happiness which others enjoy, the victim of envy feels no rest nor peace in his miserable heart. In his futile repinings, he opens that heart to a noisy multitude of rebellious murmurings;

and how can he listen to the whisperings of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Love, until their clamor is stilled?

Neither does the vice of sloth exempt the heart of the sinner from the presence of that multitude, the clamor of which entirely drowns the Saviour's voice.

On the contrary, the Christian, whose ruling passion it is, is particularly prone to dissipations and distractions; and the deadly lethargy which possesses him renders him powerless to still the tumult and put the multitude forth.

To all who listen to-day to my voice I would say: Empty your hearts, and cultivate that spirit of recollection which will make you realize what alone is necessary to work out your salvation. View, in the light of that eternity which draws nearer each moment, the vanity and nothingness of all that for which you so eagerly strive. Nothing so earnestly conduces to a true conversion as frequent meditation on death.

"And when the multitude was put forth, Jesus went in and took her by the hand." A vivid realization of the certainty of death and its rapid approach takes the sinner, as it were, by the hand to raise him from his lethargy.

Besides this interior tumult engendered by the various passions, there are also many exterior circumstances which keep him in a state of constant disgust. Nay, even the Christian, who is not guilty of very grievous offenses, experiences this also.

First, there are the thousand distractions of daily life which crowd upon the man who, wholly taken up

with the idea of providing for his support as well as he can, and, perhaps, of laying up the wealth of this world, can not spare time to think of the next. He is too busy to burst the bonds of sin and be converted to God.

The busy signs of life in a large city, the constant turmoil, the ceaseless hurrying to and fro of crowds in eager pursuit of some favorite aim,—all show how little consideration is given to the solemn truth that we are destined to die.

Even those who are placed above the necessity of working for their maintenance, nevertheless find ample excuse for directing their thoughts from heaven and God. Some are so engrossed with politics, with schemes and plans for the advancement of themselves, of their friends, or of their party, that they forget to pray, or to fulfill their duties as Catholics. If the whispers of conscience can not be entirely stilled, their cry is: "To-morrow! to-morrow!" and so day after day passes by, until, without warning, the end draweth nigh, and then cometh the night "wherein no man can work." The votary of pleasure plunges recklessly into every dissipation, drinking deeply of the poisoned cup, and seeking thus vainly to gratify passion, which, alas, is insatiable! Mark it well, most beloved in Christ, that Jesus did not restore the dead girl to life until the noisy multitude was put forth. Then drive from your hearts and banish forever the tumultuous multitude of thoughts and temptations which these seven deadly sins engender therein.

Meditate upon death, remember your last end, and you will repent of your sins; your Saviour, who died for you upon the cross, will bid your souls arise from the sleep of spiritual death, and may God grant that you will hearken to his voice! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And they laughed Him to scorn."—Matt. 9, 24.

THE noisy multitude mocked and laughed at Jesus. The soldiers of the governor assembled together, and after having removed His garments, they, in derision, put a scarlet cloak about Him, and a crown of thorns upon His head, and a reed for a scepter in His hand, while they heaped every insult upon Him. But not only the rabble treated Him thus; for Herod and his wicked courtiers loaded this meek and suffering Saviour of the world with every species of ignominy which malice could suggest!

Even when He hung in agony upon the cross, to consummate the great work of redemption, the Pharisees stood beneath and laughed Him to scorn!

But, lo! the sun was darkened, the earth trembled to her very depths, the dead arose and walked abroad, the vail in the temple was rent asunder; for nature, appalled at the mighty wrong that had been wrought by man, gave evidence of her grief and woe. Then, those who had been loudest in their wicked treatment of our Saviour were terrified, and went away filled with confusion!

As Christ was treated, my brethren, so will be treated all those who follow His divine example by walking in the sorrowful way of the cross. As He was persecuted, so will His devoted children be per-

secuted; as He was reviled, so will they be covered with scorn; as He was nailed to the cross, so must they expect to be nailed to the cross of mortification and ignominy. Christ has foretold this, and as He Himself says: "The disciple is not greater than his Master."

Thus it was in ages past, and thus it will continue. The Pagan world mocked and derided the Church of God, and those who are not of her fold do it to-day. The heretic, the apostate, and the Christian who is so in name alone, fling insults and scorn at the Church and her faithful children, and their wickedness shall not cease until time shall be no more!

But, my dear brethren, you who are striving to fulfill the holy will of your divine Master, do not permit this mockery to disturb you, but rather let it be a subject of joy!

O Mary, who beneath the cross, didst bear with unshaken courage the cruel mockeries offered to thy divine Son, assist us to accept with patience, and even joy, for Christ's sake, the affronts which we, as Catholics, may have to bear!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

Among the innumerable weapons by which hell, with its earthly accomplices, seeks to attack and assault the Church,—the kingdom of God, collectively and individually,—there is none that works such ir-

remediable mischief as ridicule. Regarded in itself, it seems to be harmless, and incapable of gaining even a passing notice from those against whom it is aimed; but, alas! it is not so, for a dread of being laughed at has not only, in many instances, kept Protestants and infidels from entering that Church which, in their hearts, they believe to be the only one wherein salvation is to be found, but it has been effective in preventing the return to God of those who have strayed from the path of virtue! Alas! that terrible fear that worldlings will laugh at their piety, has proved the eternal ruin of many a soul! What folly to regard the mockery of poor worms of the earth like themselves! Let us briefly consider who are they who ridicule us if we openly profess our faith, and live, according to its divine teachings, pious, pure, and holy lives.

Even though they may be sceptered monarchs, adorned with glittering diadems, and seated upon lofty thrones, they are poor frail mortals,—mortals doomed to die,—whose appearance in a few short days after death will be most revolting,—subjects, not indeed for ridicule, but for the deepest disgust! They are men with perhaps the guilt of mortal sin upon their souls, in whom are verified the description of Christ: Being born of the devil, and resembling him!

Oh, could we but see the deformity of a soul in this diabolical state, we would almost die of horror!

Who are they who ridicule the faithful children of God? They are mortals who must one day be called

before the judgment-seat of Christ, and, if they appear before that terrible tribunal, weighed down with the guilt of that mockery upon their souls, they will surely be among those who, on the last day, will cry out: "Woe to us, fools, who laughed and derided them, and now they are among the children of light; but the way of truth was not with us!" Who are those scoffers? Men who, when on the last great day, the most hidden crimes will be revealed, will shriek aloud, begging the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them up, but instead they will be covered with ignominy and scorn. Then will they be forced to hear, extended by Christ to the just, the gracious invitation: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world;" while upon them will be pronounced the terrible sentence: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," and they will descend body and soul into hell!

Thus will the Lord fulfill His promise: "Whosoever will confess Me before man, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven,"—before all the angels and saints,—when I shall come in all My power and majesty, to render to every man according to his works!

Let these considerations induce you, my brethren, to disregard the ridicule aimed at you by the enemies of our holy faith, who mock at and revile all those who strive to show forth by their lives that theirs is not a dead, but a living faith. They despise those

who live not to amass the treasures of this world, but to lay up everlasting riches in a happy eternity,—who care not to seek the transitory honors and empty favor of this world, when a few brief years of self-denial will put them into possession of eternal joys!

They despise you because you believe, and yet how many unanswerable arguments prove the truth of faith as Christ announced it to the world!

When Jesus raised the dead daughter of the ruler to life, admiration and wonder took the place of derision!

This miracle and numberless others, as well as the resurrection of Christ Himself, ratify the truths of faith, which are supported, moreover, by the testimony of the Prophets, illustrated by the holiness of the Gospel's teachings,—by all the glorious labors of Holy Church for the salvation of the human race,—by the virtuous lives not only of many who are still living upon earth, but also of those who, by the sanctity of their lives, have merited to be pronounced saints by this Holy Catholic Church, and are in heaven!

Is there any thing more glorious than this Holy Church which we call our mother, to which Christ has assigned such pre-eminence by her four marks. She is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic; and, for over eighteen hundred years, she has illumined and enlightened the world. Is there not every reason to be proud of being children of this glorious mother?

Ah, my dear friends, the enemies of the Church have no reason to revile those who live as her true

children. They ridicule the practice of prayer, knowing nothing of the sweetness contained therein, and utterly ignorant that the fervent Catholic enjoys a happiness—to them incomprehensible—of union with God while yet on earth, and an abundance of spiritual favors therefrom. They laugh at you because you assist at divine service, in their ignorance of the sublimity of that sacrifice which the Church offers up, and the graces contained in the reception of the most adorable Sacrament of the altar.

They laugh at you, faithful Catholics, because you do not rush eagerly in pursuit of worldly riches, honors and pleasures, but prefer those which are eternal. They despise you because, like Solomon, you feel impelled to exclaim: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," save to love and serve God. Why? St. Augustine tells us when he says that God has created our hearts for himself, and that they shall find no rest until they rest in him. Therefore, let us never lose courage when we are laughed at for doing our duty, nor be dejected when we are striving to follow the example of the crucified One, who was mocked and derided and cruelly reviled. Then, through Him, we will one day be eternally glorified in that heavenly home where, with the whole celestial host, we will entone the praises of our Saviour Jesus Christ!—Amen!

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

FIRST SERMON.

"Then shall appear, the sign of the Son of Man in heaven."—Matt. 24, 30.

TO-DAY, we are reminded by Christ, in the Gospel, of the signs and warnings which shall herald the day of judgment, that terrible day which will witness at once the resurrection of the dead and the approach of the divine Judge. Of all these signs, I have selected for your consideration to-day the appearance in the heavens of the sign of the Son of Man, the cross, which will announce the coming of Christ.

What Christ has revealed to us of the signs which shall be sent as warnings of His advent, should cause us to reflect most deeply upon those things which shall come upon us at the end of the world, when, in the expressive words of the Gospel, "Men shall wither away with fear and expectation of what is to come upon them."

It should so dispose our hearts that we may be ready to appear before the tribunal of Christ, whenever He shall call us from this earth. There is one circumstance of which our Lord makes mention, and

which alone is of sufficient weight to strengthen us in our resolution to live only for the purpose for which He has given us our very existence, and for which He has accomplished in us the great work of redemption. I allude to the appearance of the cross in the heavens on the last day.

This cross will show forth all the infinite and adorable perfections of the divine nature.

O Mary, mother of God and mirror of His adorable perfections, pray for us that we, upon the terrible day of final reckoning, may be enabled to rejoice with thee when that cross, by which thou didst stand to hear the last sigh of thy dying Son, appears unto the world once more!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

God would not one day judge the world if He were not just, on account of the angels, as St. Paul assures us. A remarkable expression. The sense of these words of the Apostle may be thus explained: If the ways of God were not all the ways of truth and emanations of His infinite perfections, the angels, whom God created as beings of the highest order, and at the same time pure and holy, would never allow what is wrong to pass as just.

In this world we are not permitted to behold our Lord face to face, nor to know Him as He is in the splendor of His majesty; so it is with His works

which are, as it were, concealed by a vail which we dare not, if we could, remove. I will make use of a comparison. The mysterious workings of divine Providence, as time passes on, weave, as it were, a carpet of the various acts and scenes of our lives. Look upon the reverse side, and you will see the threads running hither and thither, without beauty or apparent design. But upon the day of judgment the gorgeous texture will be turned in the presence of all mankind, of the angels, and of all the devils. All will then behold with vision, clear and distinct, how the Lord hath ever worked to lead the souls created by His divine power to eternal happiness, and that whatever came to mar His benignant plans arose from an abuse of that free-will with which every rational being has been endowed. Even Lucifer, with all his fallen angels will pronounce his *confiteor*, and, with the millions of reprobate souls who chose to array themselves under his standard, will give testimony to the justice of God, impelled to it by the sight of the cross in the heavens.

The cross on the last day will stand forth in bold relief upon the sky, as the symbolical expression of the work of redemption, and also as a mirror in which the divine attributes appear most brilliant and resplendent.

First, it will reflect the splendor of the divine omnipotence by which He called the world into existence; for nothing is impossible with God, as the angel declared to Mary when he announced the great mys-

tery of the incarnation, the most sublime triumph of the Almighty. By naught, save omnipotence, could this wonder of wonders have been effected. Omnipotence alone could unite the divine nature with a human nature by the hypostatic union of the second person of the blessed Trinity with that human nature. O miracle! God might create myriads of worlds, each one more glorious than the other, yet it would not be such a proof of His almighty power as His becoming man. For He did not join Himself to a human person, but assumed the human nature in Christ, and thereby became as truly man, as He was God from all eternity. O wonder of wonders!

The cross will also shine forth brilliantly on the last day, as the glorious reflex of the divine understanding and wisdom, whose triumph comes from the Incarnation of the Son of God. Only a God could have conceived this sublime idea of thus reconciling the fallen human race to God, of changing the curse of sin into a source of happiness, the loss of paradise into eternal beatitude.

The holy cross will also sparkle on the last day in the firmament as the reflected splendor of God's infinite mercy. How fitting it is that this divine attribute should not only be glorified by the ransom of the fallen human race, as illustrated in the cross, but also be entirely vindicated before all men. If it were possible for one person to take upon himself the burden of the sins of the entire world, and if he had at the same time been guilty himself of the most heinous

crimes which the heart can conceive, in the Sacrament of Baptism, at the words "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,"—supposing true contrition on his part,- all those sins would be remitted, and every stain washed away from his soul; so that if he were to die that moment, he would immediately enter heaven through the merits of Christ. And if a Christian had sullied the whiteness of his baptismal robe, and marred its beauty not only with some venial faults, but with the most diabolical crimes; after a true contrition and sincere confession on the part of that sinner, at the words of the priest: "I absolve thee," united to the petition of Christ: "Father, forgive!" his guilt would be washed away.

Upon the day of final doom the cross will reflect the sanctity and holiness of the Lord of heaven and earth; for upon it the Sacred Heart of Jesus was opened, and from the wound came forth the Holy Church supplied with the means of salvation sufficient to make us, even in this life, pure as the angels in heaven.

On that momentous day the cross will beam with glorious light,—indeed, the splendor of its radiance will fall with scathing brightness upon those wretched spirits whose doom is everlasting fire, for it will be the reflection of that divine attribute *justice*.

It will also irradiate the heavens with a lovely light, the reflex of God's *longanimity*. As Christ stretched forth His arms upon the cross, so will He continue to

do unto the end of time, as a sure refuge for all the children of men.

On that last and terrible day the holy cross will brightly shine to reflect the *truth* and *fidelity* of the Lord. For the truths of our divine faith are the Word of God promulgated by the Church, which remains as unchangeable and infallible in its doctrines as when it came forth from the Heart of our Lord on the cross. The work of redemption, consummated by Christ on the cross, was not a work of necessity, but of the infinite love of God.

Happy we, beloved in Christ, if we, as the cross continually exhorts us to do, glorify God in all His attributes by our virtues while on earth; then will we most surely hail its appearance in the heavens with joy and rapture on the resurrection morn!—Amen!

SECOND SERMON.

"And there shall appear the sign of the Son of man in the heavens."—Matt. 24, 30.

WE are assured by Holy Scripture that man's life is a warfare, and only those, most beloved in Christ, who valiantly fight, and bear away the palm of victory, will be rewarded by hearing those consoling words which are enunciated in the Gospel, which speaks of the signs which shall herald the end of the world: "Lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand."

Man is free; salvation will not be forced upon any one; but Christ has given to every Christian sufficient grace to gain eternal life, while He also gives the admonition: "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

Man, then, must stand the test of freedom here upon earth, wage ceaseless war against the enemies of his salvation, and win a glorious victory against those who strive to turn him from the path of right. Certainly there are many and powerful foes, and yet we can overthrow them all, if we use one weapon, and that is the weapon of the holy cross.

On the day of judgment the cross will appear as a sign of victory before we are joined to the Church triumphant. Let this, then, be the subject of our meditation to-day.

O Mary, who didst crush the head of the serpent, thus triumphing over death and hell, pray for us, that, shielded by the safeguard of the holy cross, we may valiantly combat as children of the militant Church.

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

When Constantine approached the city of Rome, conquered Maxentius, that relentless persecutor of the Church of Christ, and pursued the flying foe until the waters of the Tiber engulfed them, a cross appeared in the sky in his presence, and before his entire army, with the following inscription, in Greek: "In this conquer." All who witnessed this prodigy were struck with astonishment and awe, just as mankind will be overwhelmed with terror or delight at the sign of the Son of man, which shall appear in the heavens at the day of judgment.

"In this conquer." The cross will appear in the heavens on the last day as a banner of victory for those who have fought the good fight and gained the crown of life; it will also be to the elect a sign of eternal bliss, a pledge of everlasting happiness, a token of that never-ending reward which shall be awarded to them in the presence of angels and of men.

And what of the reprobate? What of those lost and miserable beings doomed to dwell in everlasting fire? Oh, their cries of despair, when they first behold the "sign of the Son of man" in the heavens! How bitter will be the thought that they might so

easily have conquered the enemy of their souls had they but employed this powerful weapon to vanquish that demon, who will now torment them forever! Yes, my dear brethren, despair will be their portion; and, at the sight of the cross, they will be forced to acknowledge that their punishment is just.

The three enemies against which we have constantly to struggle during life, are the *world*,—the *flesh*,—and the *devil*.

First, the *world*, with cunning malice, rather than with open warfare—this vigilant foe—is continually seeking our ruin, and with its brilliant allurements, pernicious examples and dazzling promises it too often succeeds. But here, my dear friends, we have a most powerful weapon in the cross of Christ, which will remind us of our Saviour, who will not accept a divided heart. He Himself says that no one can serve God and the world; that, as the world hath persecuted Him, so also will it persecute His faithful children, and that whoever loves the world will perish with the world,—"no one can serve God and mammon." Whosoever views the world in that light which shines from the holy cross, lives indeed in the world, but not of the world. To him its enticements possess no charm, for he lives so that he can exclaim, with St. Paul: "I am crucified to the world, and the world to me;" and, although beset by snares on every side, he gains a glorious victory over this powerful foe. On the other hand, the Christian, who lives in the world without the knowledge which the cross of Christ

imparts, pursues the broad and pleasant path which leads to ruin. How many! O how many! walk thereon! unmindful that the end is eternal woe!

Our second great foe is the *flesh*, with its mighty army of inordinate desires and deeply-rooted passions; but here, too, we are furnished with a powerful means of defense against their attacks. Look upon the cross; it seems to say: "Deny thyself." If you listen to its exhortations, God will assist you, and you will be enabled to conquer this second foe. "Deny thyself; take up thy cross and follow Me." Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with all its desires. Whosoever lives thus, beloved in Christ, ever pushing forward, though sometimes faltering on the rugged path, will reach the goal at last.

Our third foe and constant enemy in the pursuit of salvation is the *devil;* but here again we need not fear, for Christ has placed a weapon within our reach, the mere sight of which will put the evil spirits to flight. They know too well that cross which triumphed over them, and weakened their power to ruin souls. They know that through this blessed sign the Lord has brought to repentance many a precious soul redeemed by His blood, but seduced for a time by those wily demons of hell with their wicked arts.

In the Old Testament we read that the Israelites in the wilderness, having given way to sinful repinings, our divine Lord punished them by sending fiery serpents in their midst, from the bite of which many of them died. Brought to a sense of their ingratitude

by this visitation, those who survived repented of their fault; and Moses, by the command of God, raised on high a brazen serpent, setting it up for a sign, and those who were bitten looked upon it and were healed.

The serpent thus placed on high in the wilderness is, according to all interpretations of the holy fathers, a figure and type of our Redeemer nailed to the cross,—of that Saviour who became man for us, who called us His brethren, sinful children of men as we are, and who suffered so many and such bitter torments for us. Our iniquities were placed upon Him, and He bore the heavy burden without a murmur.

Has the infernal serpent attacked you with its venomous fangs? One glance at the cross of Jesus Christ will save you from eternal death, as you will clearly understand if you consider the wounds made by the different passions. For every one you will find a cure in the saving balm which flows from the cross.

Are you tempted by pride, or has the infernal serpent inflicted thereby a dangerous and almost fatal wound upon your soul? Look at the cross, and find your remedy in the thought of Him who humbled Himself, "even to the death of the cross." Perhaps avarice and greed of gold are the fangs by which the venomous serpent has wounded your soul? One glance at the cross will save you, for you will be reminded of Him who became poor and destitute for love of man. The serpent of wrath has, perhaps, enfolded you in its coils, and your peril each moment increases? Then call upon your Saviour; cast but one

glance at his holy cross. One thought of the meek Lamb of God, "who taketh away the sins of the world," and of your Saviour's supplication on the cross,—"Father, forgive,"—and you will gain the victory, It may be that the infernal serpent of gluttony is winding its coils around you, or has even fastened its fangs in your soul? Look at the cross and think of the meek Victim Who hung thereon, exclaiming: "I thirst."

Is it the serpent of impurity, of sensual gratification, which has twined itself round your heart, perhaps wounding your soul almost unto death? Oh, even here you will find a salutary balm in looking at the cross, and the five sacred wounds of your Lord! Consider that sacred Victim, whose lacerated flesh hung quivering on the cross, and you will conquer this sin so hideous in the sight of God.

Does the serpent of sloth and indifference in matters of religion threaten to ruin your soul? You are furnished with a weapon wherewith to fight and conquer. Look at the cross and at your dying Saviour, whose lips pronounce the words: "It is consummated." Toil and suffering and persecution for three and thirty years has He patiently and joyfully endured for you, and now "it is consummated."

To those also who are striving after perfection I have a word to say: You, too, have much to contend with in your zealous efforts; for the kingdom of heaven is gained by violence, but the holy cross will be a most powerful aid; glance at it frequently, and meditate upon the sufferings of Him Who died thereon!

Thus you will be wonderfully strengthened in faith, hope, and charity, as well as all the moral virtues, such as humility, patience, self-denial, that are the supports of a holy life.

That your lives may be a true and perfect imitation of His own, our divine Saviour will try your fidelity by trials and sufferings, as gold is tested in the furnace to prove its value. Here, too, look upon the cross, and you will esteem all sufferings light and all sacrifices pleasant.

Christ Himself had, through bitter sufferings, to enter heaven. Then, is it not just that you, too, should walk in the royal way of the cross for love of Him, before you win eternal joy? Oh, what joy will be your portion, if, when death is drawing nigh, you can say, with Jesus: "It is consummated." Then, indeed, upon the last and terrible judgment day, the holy cross, upon which you have so often looked in life, will be a dear and familiar sign—a pledge of bliss, and a glorious token of victory for evermore! Amen!

THIRD SERMON.

"And there shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven."—Matt. 24, 30.

ON this earth we behold collected together an immense number of people. The good and the bad, the believing Christian and the infidel who scoffs at the very existence of a God,—those who defend and those who persecute the Church of Christ,—those who profess her religion and those who are separated from her fold,—all are living together, almost without a mark to distinguish them!

But it will not always be so; for the hour will come which shall witness the eternal separation of light and darkness. The Gospel wherein we read that the cockle is to be burned, but the wheat gathered up and cared for, assures us of this: "Let the good seed grow with the cockle until the harvest, then I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but gather the wheat into My barn." These are the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The reapers are the angels; the good seed signifies the just, and the cockle the unjust. Christ also compares the just to sheep and the wicked to goats, bidding the former go to His right; that is, the right of the cross,—the wicked to His left; that is, the left of the cross, which sends forth its rays to herald the coming of the divine Judge!

It is the cross that on the last day divides the wicked from the good!

And can you, my brethren, realize that each one of us will be there, either to rejoice at the vision of the sign of redemption, or to view it as a harbinger of woe? If the former, then must it be the standard around which we rallied during life, the light which guided us on our way to God. Then, indeed, the sign of the Son of man in heaven will be to us a sign of joy!

O Mary, who with such admirable fortitude didst stand beneath the cross, obtain for us a portion of the spirit of endurance which animated thee, that we also may endure unto the end!

I speak in the most holy name of Jesus, for the greater honor and glory of God!

We read in the life of St. Lawrence Justinian that, when in his youth he was about to make choice of a state of life, he took a crucifix, placed it before him, and fell on his knees. Gazing with loving devotion upon the image of his Lord, he mentally called up all the riches, all the honors and pleasures which he could expect in this world; while, on the other hand, he considered the treasures which faith bestows, and the Divine promises made of delights and treasures which last for ever!

He compared the riches of earth with the glories of heaven, the fame of this world with eternal honors,

and the empty joys which worldlings hold so dear, to the endless delights which are the portion of the blessed. Then he looked upon the image of the Crucified, and murmured: "What shall I do?"

Undoubtedly that glance decided him, by recalling to his mind that, if he wished to become perfect, to become truly holy, and to attain an exalted position in heaven, he must trample the world under foot and follow his divine Lord. He did so, and went on with such unfaltering zeal and unshaken fidelity that he became a glorious saint!

Lawrence Justinian is not alone in resolving to serve God in the most perfect manner. Many do the same, but they do not persevere. They begin well, but the path to perfection is narrow and beset with thorns, while the broad and pleasant road to perdition is bordered with lovely roses, whose fragrant leaves conceal the thorns that are not felt until too late. Thus the unstable Christian wavers in his efforts to lead a holy life, and too often abandons the pursuit of piety. Christ Himself suffered contempt and ignominy, and was held up to public scorn, while the multitude received Him with loud cries of "Crucify Him! crucify him!" Those very people who, but a few short days before, cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David," angrily demand His death. Think of this when you are tempted to waver in your resolution to follow the straight and narrow path. The kingdom of heaven is gained by violence; there is a struggle, and very often a severe and protracted one;

there are storms and temptations which threaten to destroy even the well-trained virtue of a life-time. Be firm, therefore, and let not the allurements of the world, the temptations of the flesh, nor the snares of the devil, induce you to falter. Look frequently at the crucifix, and you will be strengthened, remembering how Christ suffered for you. Imitate His divine example. How can we look upon the cross without sentiments of the deepest affection? how can it fail to excite feelings of the most profound awe, when we reflect that it will one day appear in the heavens to bear witness to the justice of God in deciding the eternal fate of the millions who tremble in His sight? One glance at it must remind us that we are destined to be either eternally happy or eternally miserable.

Either, Or. Oh, words of terrible import! Let us consider separately the circumstances of the final judgment as they have been revealed by Christ Himself, and we will be the better enabled to realize what is to come upon the world!

When the warning sound of the angel's trumpet penetrates to the very depths of the grave, your body will obey the summons, and arise either glorious and beautiful from the tomb, or come forth horrible and disfigured before all men. More luminous and brilliant than the sun, radiant in celestial beauty will the bodies of the blessed arise, while hideous beyond conception will those of the damned appear!

Enveloped in flames, more loathsome and repulsive than the most vivid imagination can depict, will be

those bodies from which even their wretched souls will shrink away! *Either, Or.* Either your body will arise to be joined to a blessed and happy soul, or to be united to an infernal inhabitant of hell! Oh, what food for reflection! what a motive for firmly resolving, cost what it may, to follow Christ, to obey His commandments, and to walk in the rugged way of the cross, so that upon the last great day your body will arise glorious, to be united to your happy soul forever!

Then, most beloved in Christ, the eternal gates will open. Those above will disclose to view the regions of light, the haven of bliss unutterable, of joy eternal; but those below will reveal a scene of horror, which, could you behold it now, would strike you dead with terror! From above will be seen descending the transfigured souls of the blessed, more brilliant than the sun, winging their flight under the guidance of their guardian angels to the graves where they will behold their bodies coming forth to meet them, to be united to them for evermore. What inexpressible joy! What a contrast to the other side of the picture!

Through the yawning gates of the fathomless depths of hell, see those despairing souls conducted by demons to the graves where lie the bodies which they pampered and sinned for while on earth. What terror will seize upon those wretched souls when such bodies are forced upon them!

Reflect deeply upon this: Either your body will arise radiant and beautiful, or black and horrible!

Either, Or. Two little words, but worthy of the deepest consideration.

Christ will send forth His angels to separate the good from the bad,—the sheep at the right,—the goats at the left. Either the demons of hell will clutch you with death-like grasp, and force you to the left,—or the good angels will surround you and place you at the right. *Either, Or.* Can you reflect on those words and remain tepid in the service of God and the great affair of salvation?

After this momentous separation, a supernatural light will illumine each conscience, and the hidden secrets of all hearts will be made clear as day.

Either, Or. The sentence will be either: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you;" or: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!"

There is no third place. Either you will one day ascend body and soul into heaven, or go down to that region where darkness and horror dwell! Either high up in the kingdom of glory and joy, or beneath in the region of torments and woe! Either up with the glorious heavenly host, to live with them forever in beatitude and love,—or down with the hideous infernal spirits to suffer in fire, yet never to die! Either up to Jesus and Mary, to claim the reward of a life well spent,—or down with Lucifer and Anti-christ, to partake of their punishment! Either up to God, to be with God, to see God, to share His infinite beatitude,

to become like unto God for all eternity,—or down, to be apart from God, to be eternally separated from His gracious Majesty, to be the companion of the lost for evermore! Either up to the light of glory,—or down to devouring fire!

Think frequently upon this alternative, and you will live in the service of God, firm in His love, and strong in your determination to imitate Christ until death. Then, on the day of judgment, you will salute the cross as the standard of your life. You will hail its appearance with joy, knowing that through that blessed cross and Him Who died thereon, your soul has been redeemed from sin and hell, and enabled to gain the port of safety, to obtain access to the heavenly Jerusalem!—Amen!

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